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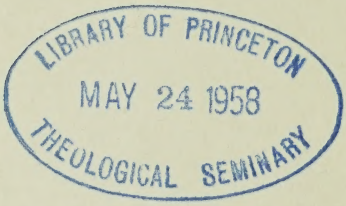

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The primacy of worship

THE PRIMACY OF WORSHIP

Von Ogden Vogt, now Minister Emeritus of the First Unitarian Society of Chicago, attended Beloit College, Yale University, and the Harvard Divinity School. He was General Secretary of the United Society of Christian Endeavor from 1903 to 1907. From 1911 to 1925 he served in the Congregational ministry, and until 1944 he was minister of the First Unitarian Church, Chicago. Dr. Vogt has been faculty lecturer on Christian art and architecture at Chicago Theological Seminary and Beloit College, as well as Lowell Lecturer in Boston, and William Vaughn Moody Lecturer at the University of Chicago. Among his publications are *Art and Religion* (1921; revised edition 1948); *Modern Worship* (1927); and *Cult and Culture* (1952).

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THE PRIMACY OF WORSHIP

Von Ogden Vogt

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To the Memory of

MORTON DENISON HULL

Churchman—Legislator—Philanthropist

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PREFACE

My college years lay in that time, now scarcely remembered, when Greek and Latin were required studies. There was then some tension between the classics and the growing influence of science. Now it is seen that the open mind of classicism and the searching mind of science are united in a struggle with medieval and Reformation dogmatism. A deep but needless cleft between these forces is not lessening but widening. It is an ominous division which, if not healed, will bring untold disasters of spiritual disorder upon our nation and upon mankind.

This book proposes one definite measure which might go far towards closing this breach. The proposal is to give the primary place in religion to worship which unites rather than to beliefs which divide. I have long advocated this doctrine. The idea of worship as a structure of religious experiences was presented in *Art and Religion;* in *Modern Worship,* worship was given a generic definition as the celebration of life; in *Cult and Culture,* religion was shown to be the complete life and the comprehending category, and its expression in worship or the cult to be the primary human power in the formation and preservation of societal cultures. Here the same thesis of the primacy of worship is derived from the mergence of the Platonic ideas of truth, goodness and beauty, the most religious values in our classic heritage.

Sources of ideas about the True Christianity are numerous. Parts of the chapter are derived from unpublished lectures of the late Frank Chamberlain Porter of Yale University. Diverging or additional conceptions do not, I believe, do violence to Professor Porter's spirit or meanings. One of his most radical interpretations, which is decisive also for many others, turns upon the

meaning of the phrase *son of man* in Mark 2. In his view, the term as here used is not a Messianic one, but means simply *man.* Amongst other radical views of his are: that in the teachings of Jesus before his death we have the full gospel; and that the true imitation of Christ is not of his way of life but of his nature and calling. The latter portion of the chapter which relates the religion of Jesus to the Platonic ideas is my own conception.

Gratefully acknowledged are permissions to the Beacon Press as follows: from the Macmillan Company to print passages from *Science and the Modern World* and from *Symbolism* by Alfred North Whitehead, and sentences from my own *Cult and Culture;* from the Yale University Press to print sentences from *A Philosophical Study of Mysticism* by Charles A. Bennett; from Ralph Fletcher Seymour of Chicago to print a short selection from *Man's High Adventure* by Samuel A. Harper; from the Meeting House Press of Boston to print a passage from *Man's Hidden Search* by Kenneth L. Patton; from the Yale Divinity News to print sentences by Frank C. Porter published in the *Yale Divinity Quarterly;* from *Faith and Freedom,* a journal published by Manchester College, Oxford, to reprint "The New Religious Atom"; and from *Unity* magazine of Chicago to reprint the section about education and portions of the Norm of American Religion.

VON OGDEN VOGT

August 25, 1957

THE PRIMACY OF WORSHIP

"The universe has three children, born at one time, which reappear under different names in every system of thought. These stand respectively for the love of truth, for the love of good, and for the love of beauty. These three are equal. Each is that which he is essentially so that he cannot be surmounted or analyzed, and each of these three has the power of the others latent in him, and his own patent."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Great Companions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1927), Vol. I, pp. 140-141.

I. THE THREEFOLD IMPERATIVE

All religions have three necessities; faith, morals, and celebrations. All must have a system of ideas, a system of ethics, a system for realizing the joy of salvation. These imperatives are obvious to many but not accepted by everyone. Various religions and religious leaders, either in theory or practice, do not take seriously one or another of them.

Religion must have beliefs. Primitive religion seems to be largely comprised of rites and celebrations. But these are performed because of the supposed demands of spirits or deities having certain qualities. Beliefs about the spirits or deities depend upon some idea, however dim, of the underlying or ultimate reality. The total religious system is ascribed to the final powers.

Most religions claim that the final powers are known by revelation. Some seer or prophet or lawgiver, some incarnation of deity, has become the revealer and author of the true faith. The divine word is accepted by faith. It is not claimed to be validated by reason. Yet sooner or later, it must meet the tests of reason. No faith can long survive if it is found to be contrary to reason.

The first test of faith, to be sure, is not reason but immediate good. Indeed, life experience is not only the major test of faith but its major source. The whole story of the Old Testament religion is less intellectual than moral. Its greatest ideas of God and man were developed not by sheer thinking but by the pressures of moral problems. Western religion was derived from Hebrew morality. Yet it soon encountered the Greek mind. Very early it was expressed in formularies of ideas.

The drive of reason cannot be denied. Somewhere along the line, explanation must follow experience. It is no discredit to early Christianity that it became intellectualized. That was

inevitable. The writings of the Church Fathers and the debates of the great Councils were the intellectual efforts of early Christian leaders. Earlier still, the writings of Paul and John in the New Testament were the beginnings of Christian theology. They offered intellectual definitions and justifications for the faith. From that day to this, in one quarter or another, there have been recurrent periods of theological, that is intellectual, statement and restatement.

Changes in theology during these periods have brought about the numerous divisions of the Christian church. These changes have been demanded by new ethical problems, new knowledge, or new religious insights. The new situations have required new formulas of belief. These changes in themselves testify to the perpetual demand of the intellectual. If man is incurably religious, he is also, or perhaps even thereby, incurably reasonable.

In any case, one of the primary imperatives of religion is the intellectual. Today, human knowledge is expanding rapidly. New knowledge is constantly changing the climate of the mind which affects religious faith. Mere knowledge, of course, is not enough. Often it affords little insight into meanings and values. Nor can bald prose nor bare propositions of logic ever depict the glory of life or offer a presentment of ultimate things that is more than a faint reflection of their fullness. It is right and necessary that faith should venture beyond knowledge. But the ventures of faith must always meet the tests of practical life and religious experience. Sometime, somewhere, they must meet also the tests of reason based upon knowledge.

Whatever from time to time may be the current concerns of religious experience, whether of sin or of virtue, of human competence or divine grace, of despair or hope, of present or future fulfillments, they cannot dispense with some theory of being, some conception of all things framed to satisfy the mind. An essential imperative of religion is the intellectual.

In similar manner, the moral imperative is one of the neces-

sary concerns of religion. Religion must have morals. Religion is not only good faiths but also good works.

No historic religion was more thoroughly moralized than that of the Hebrews. It was not so in the beginning. The earliest decalogue in the Bible was not a code of morals. It specified not the duties of man to man but the rites and duties man owed to Jehovah. It was much later that the great prophets declared that their God did not require the ancient ritual sacrifices but did require right conduct of men towards each other. Thenceforth the Hebrew faith became preeminently the religion of the law. At length, in turn, the law became unduly elaborated, its rules so numerous and detailed that common people were entangled in a web of petty regulations impossible for ordinary living. Jesus rebelled against this excessive legalism, as the old prophets had rebelled against excessive ritualism. He revived the moral spirit of the prophets and carried it on to new heights of sensitivity and meaning. He summarized the law as the spirit of love. His greatest apostle declared that love must be set above all other faiths and virtues whatsoever. From the time of Jesus until now, there has never been lost in the Western world the consciousness that religion requires righteousness.

Meanwhile, by a curious twist of mind, there have been many denials of man's capacity to do right. These have ranged all the way from crude fatalism, through philosophic determinism, to subtle doctrines of man's utter dependence upon the grace of God. Against these temptations to laxity, the healthy religious mind has always offered a stubborn resistance. It may be true that any good act of any man is literally an act of God. It may at the same time be true that that particular act of God could not have occurred without the act of that man. Moral responsibility is a plain necessity of religion.

The moral demand is no denial of the need for beliefs, the demand of the intellectual. It is rather the recognition that ideas about reality do not become religion until acted upon by

inner intention and purpose, that faith without works is dead, that the heart of the gospel is love. The moral imperative is an accepted tenet of the Christian heart and mind.

In like manner, all religions are systems of satisfaction, of redemption, of life fulfillment. Religion is not only theology and ethics; it is the service of the highest, rewarded and consummated in communion with the Most High. Religion is not all beliefs and duties; it is the celebration of life, the joy of salvation.

The rites of primitive religion were largely directed towards practical objectives: fertility, power in war, and other ends. They were at the same time occasions of tribal festivity and fervor. They utilized numerous secondary arts and efforts, costuming, singing, and dancing, pantomimic actions, sympathetic magic, and the gathering of clans, all of which contributed to the enjoyment of religion. All the arts have been developed and employed in the service of religion. In religion, these arts are never ends in themselves. They mingle and merge imperceptibly into an experience of life fulfillment, a sense of life at its highest, a sense of touch with the final powers. In the rites and sacraments and festivals of religion, the desired end is some rapport with the last reality, an immediate experience of the veritable presence of the life of all things that is the life and being of God.

It was no accident, but rather an inherent religious necessity, that Isaiah did much to restore the cult to its valid place in religion. Both Amos and Isaiah seem to have denied any place for the cult as a system of animal sacrifices. Yet Isaiah may well have been the author of a grand stream of religious experience which called for a true cult of the spirit wherein the sacrifices of thanksgiving and of righteousness were blessed with the reward and consummation of immediate salvation. This end and object, life fulfillment and completion, the harmony of man with his gods or his God, must be one of the imperatives of all religion. Religion always says, "I believe that

this and this is true," and, "We must do thus and so"; but also it testifies, "This day is salvation come to this house."

Thus religion has at least these three imperatives, of mind and will and heart. It cannot dispense with what is reasonable, what is ethical, or what is mystical. Although all religions embrace these three factors, religions differ at these points. Any one religion in any place has different ideas and morals and satisfactions from all other religions in other places. Yet most religions have a singular or even multiple sameness with one another. The greatest sayings of several religions are remarkably alike.

Meanwhile, religions have changed and are changing. Despite authorities and sanctions and resistances to change, there are constant shifts of ideas in every major religion. Not only in Christianity but amongst Moslems and Buddhists, there have long been parties and divisions. The most important of these changes and differences have come from the deeps of religious experience. They have come also from new operations of the human reason, and always they have brought forth new intellectual formulations.

Is all religion then merely relative? Is there nothing in religion which abides, changeless and the same forever? Are there no religious absolutes? I think that there are, and to that consideration we move.

II. THE RELIGIOUS ABSOLUTES

Many minds will rebel against the suggestion of an absolute. There are no absolutes, they say, all is relative, change is universal, there is no such existence as the absolute.

On the other hand, popular religion has a strong sense of an absolute or final revelation. Much of religion clings to the idea of God as the Absolute One. Without attempting to resolve this dilemma, may we not, nevertheless, find religious absolutes. Are there not absolutes in the sense of unqualified demands of religion? I suggest that there are three such.

Spirit of Truth

The first is the spirit of truth—not particular truths, but the love of truth; not specific beliefs, but the perpetual search for more and more of the truth. Oftentimes in the past, ideas once widely held to be truths have been later found to be in error. It must always be a risk to base religion upon any particular set of beliefs. Many religions have required adherence to particular beliefs, few have simply demanded the spirit of truth as an absolute above and beyond all particular truths whatsoever.

There can be no situation in which the demand for the spirit of truth does not obtain. It is unconditional. In every circumstance and in every place, it is necessary to love the truth.

Many unfortunate effects flow from the alternative course. This alternative is not the love of truth, but the love of beliefs. That beliefs are often held as faiths and hence given an unwarranted sanction, does not alter the fact that they are merely beliefs. No one can object to beliefs. Everyone has and must have beliefs, perhaps a large number of them. The fundamental

error is to place belief in particular ideas above the spirit of truth.

The first effect of this error is divisiveness. To found a religious movement upon specific beliefs is to foster the sectarian spirit and the organization of sects. Any given set of beliefs becomes a barrier to those who cannot accept it.

There are good reasons for the formation of sects. Those who hold divergent opinions may find no other way either to enjoy or to promote them than the way of separation. Those who would guard traditional faiths may be justified in barring non-subscribers. Parties in religion as well as in politics are necessary to religious freedom.

Political parties, however, cannot withdraw and form a separate state. All are held together under the aegis of a common spirit of patriotism and the proper authority of government. Among scholars in universities, there are differences of opinion, yet all are in honor bound by the principle of academic freedom and the spirit of truth. Scientists, historians, philosophers, economists, and all other scholars are required to serve the spirit of truth as their primary loyalty. The moment they swerve from that service, we are all lost. Not the varieties of temporary opinion but the common service of truth is the bond which ties together the members of the academy.

These analogies to government and education are not perfect, but they do indicate the fatal flaw in many organisms of religion. Western religion has for the most part fixed its principle of cohesion on something less than a primary norm. It has become, within itself, more divided than need be, because of its adherence to particular ideas rather than to the spirit of truth.

Far more seriously, it has barred altogether from the visible fellowships of religion innumerable people who cannot accept its particular sets of beliefs. All over the world, there are earnest men and women of good will who cannot find the deepest fellowships of life in their own communities. They are repelled

by the preaching of intellectual judgments with which they cannot agree. They have the spirit of truth, but they do not find the worship of that spirit in the churches or in the mosques and temples.

This cleft between those who have the spirit of truth and those who have the spirit of beliefs is the most dangerous of all the divisions in human life today. It threatens social order itself. Science will never come to an accord with dogmatic religion. The continuance of dogmatic preaching by the largest bodies of Christendom means a continued cleft in the spiritual life of many nations. The fatal danger in these nations is not social confusion or political disorder; it is spiritual disorder. It is the failure even to approach a composition of the differences between the secular and the religious factors of life. No nation which cannot heal the breach between scholarship and religion can achieve the spiritual order that is necessary to political order and peace.

Not only does the placing of particular beliefs above the spirit of truth cause divisiveness; it also stifles spiritual growth. If you already possess the truth, why continue the search for truth? The fixed conviction of typical religion, that it is the custodian of a final faith, is an almost complete block to spiritual growth. It fosters spiritual torpor and complacency. It offers a feeble challenge to the mind. It keeps people in their childhood where they demand to hear the same story over and over. This demand is in part legitimate: there is so much that is true and wondrous in the old story that it needs continuous telling. People do need, moreover, the comfort and assurance of a steady dependence on familiar beliefs. Yet they need also to grow and mature and meet the challenge of change with courage and competence. They need to learn to distinguish between the transient and the permanent, and to welcome the new as well as cherish the old. True religion requires the love of truth no matter where it may lead.

The love of beliefs has a third effect just as grave: it weak-

ens faith. The habit of mind which rests back upon the comfortable assurance that it already possesses the essentials of truth is dangerous to religion itself. Deep down it is closer to distrust than to faith. Because many traditional beliefs are not matters of knowledge but matters of faith, it is alleged that to raise questions is to raise doubts and weaken faith. The exact opposite is true.

Surely it is a weak faith in nature or man or God, however defined, that would confine revelations to the past and deny them to the future. It is not strength but weakness of faith which does not expect new light and truth upon the pains and glories of life. It is but a few hundred years since the initial Christian faiths began; there are yet many hundreds of thousands of years for man to live and learn upon the earth. It is inconceivable that the book of revelation is closed. It is not more religious but less religious to fix past and present beliefs as final. The true service of faith is to cherish the beliefs we have as long as we may but at all times to hold a lively expectation of more light and truth to come.

These and other ill effects of the worship of beliefs rather than the worship of truth are unfortunate and hurtful to the cause of religion. They will long hold sway, however, without the active service of the spirit of truth.

The first positive demand of the spirit of truth is to foster the increase of knowledge. Our system of secular education is so universal that we take the love of truth for granted. Religion has almost forgotten the importance of knowledge. It was not so in the early days. The founding fathers believed in the necessity of learning. In Colonial America, the establishment of schools went hand in hand with the founding of churches—and not only primary schools but also colleges, lest they lack educated leaders "when our present ministers shall lie in the dust." Many American colleges owe their origins directly to the American churches.

The world of learning is now largely autonomous. Unless

we fall under the sad fate of political tyranny, nothing can stop the advances of scholarship and science. These will proceed irrespective of assistance by religion. But there are always connections between religion and knowledge that are of vital import to freedom and to truth. Today, some of these connections are unfortunate. They are blocking the advance of truth. Religion has indeed served the truth and fostered knowledge up to a certain point. That point is the solid wall of fixed beliefs.

By this wall of fixed beliefs, religion has prevented the spread of knowledge in more than one direction. Especially has it failed to teach what scholars know about the very source of its own beliefs, the Bible itself. In its principle outlines, the story of the Bible and how it grew has long been known to scholars. It is no longer a matter of speculation or uncertainty; it is a matter of knowledge. Yet that story is still unknown to the majority of American church people.

It is true that some church publications are beginning to disclose modern knowledge of the Bible. The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, through its Division of Christian Education, has issued a one-page graphic outline which shows the dates of the principle documents and books of the Bible. This little outline is immensely valuable, but even so, it is not understandable without further explanation. It is a major misfortune that religious scholars and leaders have not used the appearance of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible as an opportune occasion for fuller exposition of knowledge about the Bible documents.

Such fuller knowledge of the Bible would have the effect of weakening some of the cherished beliefs of popular religion, but also of establishing better ones. What has thus far been done towards a popular understanding of how the Bible grew is much too little and may be too late. With every passing decade, the delay in teaching the knowledge of the Bible now available is an increasing danger to our whole society. How

can religion serve the truth in a nation if it does not love knowledge in its own house?

The failure of religion to foster knowledge in its own house has indirect but far-reaching effects in the whole educational system, from public schools to colleges and universities. It throttles the freedom of the press. The wall of beliefs is a wall of taboo which many thinkers and writers fear to pass. The result is that while people may be freely informed about all other subjects under the sun, they are kept in the dark about some of the most important religious facts and ideas. Religion that should mean enlightenment has become so tinctured with obscurantism as to shadow the whole popular mind.

The first duty of the church, then, with respect to knowledge, is to foster knowledge within itself. The church has a natural and ever-present opportunity to expand its own system of education. The American church has always been the common man's college, where his early education could be continued throughout life. There is no limit to the possibilities of adult education in the church.

The spirit of truth cannot be confined to the love of knowledge. It must explore, also, meanings and values and the validities of faith. Here begin the labors of philosophy and theology, efforts of the mind to understand all things. These labors are not only proper efforts for churchmen and men of religion, but also for scholars everywhere. While there is much about religion that may be known, as it were, only from the inside, secular scholarship is adding greatly to the values of modern knowledge for religion and the religious life.

Yet more profoundly, religion needs both to recognize and to claim her own child as truly her own. The spirit of truth is the spirit of religion whether occupied with sticks and stones or with revelations and moralities. There is a religiousness in all pure search for the truth about anything as well as in the search for the truth about Everything.

All religion must at last come to terms with truth. The truth will be its judge. The spirit of truth is no relative or qualified demand; it is a religious absolute. The chemist and the machinist and the pilot must serve the truth. Our lives are in their hands. They cannot deviate one iota from the whole truth of the stuffs and elements with which they deal. Can the priest and minister do less than they? Our souls are in their hands. If they play fast and loose with the spirit of truth, they damage the lives of countless persons today, they invite the wreckage of our whole civilization on some not too distant morrow.

Curiosity is a mark of all living creatures, and the love of truth a perpetual passion of mankind. Iknaton and Socrates and Charles Darwin and hosts of others have pushed back the barriers of darkness and opened new paths of enlightenment. Everyone may have some important part in this unending quest.

Spirit of Goodness

The first religious absolute is the spirit of truth, the second is the spirit of goodness.

It is the glory of religion that this point needs little defense. It has an all but universal acceptance. Righteousness of life is an unqualified demand of religion. The spirit of goodness is a religious absolute, meaning not particular duties but love of the right, not specific ideals but the effort for ever larger realizations of goodness.

There can be no situation in which the demand for the spirit of goodness does not obtain. It is unconditional. In every circumstance and in every place, it is necessary to love the right.

The meaning of the right, however, has many different definitions. Different religions have differing morals. Some favor polygamy, others require monogamy. Moslem countries prohibit strong drink, Christian countries do not. Hinduism

has for centuries maintained a system of caste, Buddhism has insisted upon human equality. Various groups or sects within the same religion differ in their interpretations of righteousness. Some Christians are pacifists, others favor legalized force; some hold that true Christianity implies a socialized economy, others believe in free enterprise.

Deeper than all differing ideas as to what is good conduct, is the demand for the spirit of good conduct. It is obviously not the specific virtues or ideals that are absolutes, for these are constantly changing. The absolute is the spirit of goodness.

On the whole, freedom of action among religions is greater than freedom of belief. A few religious bodies still require a specified code of morals, but most churches, while still retaining some taboos, are moving away from a negative ethics towards the spirit of goodness as a positive force.

The first demand of the spirit of goodness calls for a constant effort to understand the right and formulate the best moral principles. This demand is all the more pressing because of the moral confusion of these times. In the human situation today, three factors especially have brought about this confusion and threatened the very spirit of virtue.

First, the twentieth century has seen advances in technology which have so altered the modes of industry and commerce that the older morals are inadequate for human guidance. Technology has brought about new and larger corporate organizations, shifts and concentrations of populations, greater mobility and less stability of life, and the breakdown of old customs in all quarters of the globe. These have affected countless numbers of people unprepared for the new ethical problems involved.

Second, two wars of colossal scale have taken millions of young men out of normal living and plunged them into the midst of stark tragedies where it was difficult to feel that either good or evil had any meaning. This condition has been aggravated by the development of large-scale political tyrannies

which seem to be completely amoral. Innumerable young people in several lands have suffered the misguidance of their virtue. Many in our own country have suffered a severe shock to the very sense of right itself.

These two factors have been all the more devastating because of a third, the lag in ethical leadership. In all lands and all religions, virtue is connected with faith. This is a necessary connection. Obligations between man and man must rest upon some conception of the nature of man. Conceptions about man depend in turn upon ideas of the nature of all things. Faiths about Everything have powerful effects upon the notions of duty about anything.

For long centuries, in more than one religion, the sanctions of righteousness have been connected with belief in life after death. Good conduct in the present world will be rewarded by blessedness in the world to come. Evil living, if not punished here, will receive its just dues in the hereafter. Faiths in the Moslem paradise and in Buddhist reincarnations, no less than in the Christian heaven, have been the strength and stay of popular morality. In times past, these beliefs in future rewards and punishments have had power over the leaders of men. Emperors bowed to a Hildebrand, kings and barons quailed before a Bernard or a John Knox, leading citizens were sobered by the voice of a Cotton Mather or a Jonathan Edwards.

Today, there is no such power of faith to stay the hands of ruthless men in politics or in industry. The sanction of external rewards and punishments in the hereafter still operates over wide areas of human life. It no longer has power over intelligent men. There are, of course, many other ideas and motives that have wide influences. But we live in a world where the chief religious motivations are vestiges, derived from a cosmogony and a theology that cannot now be sustained. Religious leaders have fostered the idea that certain beliefs are necessary as sanctions to virtues. Too many men have taken them at their word, and having abandoned the beliefs, have abandoned also

the virtues. Innumerable young people, unable to accept religion as presented in its beliefs, are left without clear moral standards.

Modern technology, modern wars, and modern disbelief have upset the moral equilibrium of mankind. We cannot change the conditions and procedures of the past which have brought us to this complex and near disastrous situation. We can begin the long road of reformation. The materials are at hand for the formation of new and powerful ethical sanctions, framed upon realistic conceptions of man and of God. There are mutualities of existence, actual and potential, which, given clear expression, might become the prevalent world picture, forming a new climate of the mind and at length new inspirations of righteousness. As these are brought into coherence with a true and spiritual Christianity, they will give us new light and new hope in the spirit of goodness.

There are, meanwhile, other valuable materials at hand for the guidance of everyday morality in personal and social affairs. Modern psychology and the social sciences are shedding new lights upon the meanings of old virtues—justice, mercy, charity, love, brotherhood—and upon many ethical problems all the way from sex relations and race relations to the operation of large-scale industry. It is a prime task of religion to gather and collate its own and other contributions to moral meanings. In such a complex and bewildering time, this is a task of constant difficulty and change.

The further positive work of religion with respect to the spirit of goodness is to motivate it through worship. There is an inner and secret heart of religion where the spirit of goodness is born. The intentions of the innermost human will are decisive for religion and for life. For this reason, the heart of religion, as we may later be able to see, is deeper than either theology or ethics. It lies in the experiences and activities we call worship, the effort to reach an accord with the ultimate powers however conceived.

Here and now, we may accept the spirit of goodness as a religious absolute. Religion must always demand righteousness. It is ever calling for virtues beyond present moral definition or present moral achievement. "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Amos and Saint Francis, Gandhi and Booker T. Washington, and others without number have lived a higher than common morality. There is none so poor he cannot share their spirit of goodness.

Spirit of Beauty

The second religious absolute is the spirit of goodness, the third is the spirit of beauty.

Protestant Christianity has set little store by beauty. It has often feared and rejected the esthetic as dangerous. This fear is in part an echo of the old Judaic taboo against graven images, a taboo prevalent also in Arabic Islam. Even the recent revival of interest in the beautiful has made of it little more than a pleasant adjunct. There is no general thought of beauty as a religious absolute.

Yet men must have beauty or they die. Religion cannot be the abundant life of the complete experience without beauty. Every object of beauty is complete in itself and a symbol of all completeness. Everyone has some impulse to make beauty. The spirit of beauty is a religious absolute. It is one of the unconditional demands of religion. By the spirit of beauty, religion assists the apprehension of all things that are beautiful and requires the perpetual making of order and beauty throughout the whole of human life.

Immediate delight in the beauty around us has been testified by many races for thousands of years. Every leaf and tree of the forest and every fish of the sea satisfies us by the wholeness and perfection of its structure. Every work of good artistry stirs us by its rhythms or heals and fills us by the fullness of its

design. Anything beautiful is an end product, and the joy we have of it an end in itself.

But our satisfaction is not enough. The sense of beauty calls us to look and to see the object in itself. It says, see this flower, see this deer leaping in the woods, see this person, they are beautiful in themselves. It says, see this man—not, see this voter, this customer, this employer, this sales-lady—but rather, see this person, as he is in and for himself. The artists are the good seers. They see forms and colors that most of us never notice. They see people that we overlook. This is religion, to see through the color, the calling, the status, the talent, even the virtue, to look with respect upon the man himself.

Nor is this all. Beautiful things are not only whole in themselves, they are symbols of wholeness. Ends in themselves, they yet point instantly beyond themselves. Every object of beauty intimates the beauty of All Things. The order of each prophesies the order of All. The high arts are expressions of this faith. Every great symphony sweeps away disasters and discords by its overmastering design. Every great comedy, laughing at stiffness, asserts the flexibility of all life. Every great tragedy, facing the disorders of evil, asserts the triumph of order.

The need for some assumption, some faith, about the whole of life and being, is inescapable. The love of beauty is not decisive for such a faith. Nor is order the only element in beauty. But the presence of order or beauty is everywhere upon the earth. There is a drive through all nature towards the making of living organisms that are structures of order. This is strong support for an assumption that there is in some sense order in all reality and wholeness for all that has being. There is not only the beauty of birds and flowers and all other several and separate things without number that are beautiful, but the last and final beauty of holiness. The love of order, the hunger and thirst for beauty, has no assuagement short of the taste of God.

Finally, the love of beauty is not only receptive, it is active.

The sight of beauty stirs the impulse to make beauty. The dancer weaves his impulse into the rhythms and patterns of his dance. The painter, seeing the ineffable grace of the dance, captures one of its moments in his depiction. Then someone sees the painting and the endless chain moves on. One may well say, "I cannot dance, I cannot paint, but something I too can make that will have the grace and glory of beauty."

At its creation, a work of art points to nothing outside itself; it is completeness achieved. Yet soon, it points to everything outside. If it satisfies by its own order, it rouses dissatisfaction with the disorders that are not yet mastered. Over the wall of this beautiful garden are other parts of town that are disorderly and ugly. Outside the frame of this painting are factors of life that could not be brought into this small design. They call for larger frames and larger structures of order, material and intellectual, industrial and political, personal and social.

Even if there be some kind of universal order, it is not complete. About us and within are ugliness and discord constantly resisting the sway of order. The universality of order is not quite true until we make it so. All beautiful objects sharpen the desire to make everything beautiful; they rouse the very spirit of order and the powers of pride and capacity. They stir the intentions of the will towards the creation of order and beauty in all of life, outer and inner. There is ascribed to Socrates this intense desire for order within: "Beloved Pan and all you other gods that haunt this city, give me beauty in the inward soul. For outward beauty I am not likely to have."

Every object of beauty and every magnitude of art speaks its conflicting words. It says to us: Stay, here is finality and fulfillment, this is the end of the road and the glory of God. It says also: Go, this success is partial. Leave it behind. Fulfill the achievements of yesterday in the new creations of tomorrow.

The spirit of beauty is an unqualified demand of religion.

It is a religious absolute. The Chinese painters, the Greek sculptors, the Gothic builders filled the world with gladness and glory. There is no human being who cannot be counted among the innumerable others who have seen beauty and made beauty.

These three, then, are the unqualified demands of religion, the religious absolutes: the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Goodness, the Spirit of Beauty. These absolutes are the axioms of religion. They are unconditional in every time and place. There are no circumstances where they do not obtain nor any existences or forces that can nullify their precedence above all else. They partake of the nature of divinity, they are the ultimate mandates of humanity.

It would appear that Jesus was moved by all three:

> Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
>
> Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven.
>
> Consider the lilies of the field.

Each of these mandates, absolute in itself, is yet related to the others, and to the concrete affairs which manifest it. They together are woven into the glorious fabric of spiritual life which is religion. The activities of that interweaving are the actions and rites of worship, inner and outer, which are central in religion. It is this question as to what is central in religion which next requires attention.

III. THE CENTRALITY OF WORSHIP

In Types of Religious Bodies

All religions have three necessities: faiths, morals, and celebrations. All have a system of ideas, all have a system of ethics, all have a system for achieving the joy of salvation.

These necessities are religious absolutes. Religions differ in their ideas and beliefs, none can dispense with the spirit of truth. Religions and sects serve differing moral ideals, all must have the spirit of goodness. Church bodies develop differing rites and ceremonies, but these are ineffective without the spirit of beauty. These are unqualified demands of pure religion. But they do not become religion until they are merged.

Religion not only requires its three absolutes, it requires them together. None can stand alone. In religion, they are interwoven with each other. And wherever they are woven together, there is religion.

The spirit of truth cannot find its ultimate ends in knowledge alone.

The spirit of goodness cannot proceed in right directions without the guidance of truth.

The spirit of beauty cannot provide a refuge from failure in duty.

Each of these is a separate discipline with innumerable and far-flung labors; each is a major species of life and a major category of logic; each is an absolute demand of religion; yet each is partial. The discipline which embraces and harmonizes them all is religion. It is religion that is the comprehending category and the complete life. It is not religion as a mere idea that is all-embracing. Rather, it is religious experience and re-

ligious action which alone has completeness and unifying power. This inner experience with its inner responses is called worship.

Neither theology nor ethics nor art can be primary in religion. The first and last of religion is worship—the worship of God, or the worship and celebration of life.

You may, if you choose, regard yourself as a naturalist or a Humanist, using no divine name for life as a whole, but consider it to be nature or the universe or the cosmos. Life as a whole must still be the ultimate consideration in every judgment as to the truth of ideas, the rightness of ideals, or the values of living. The activity which considers and celebrates all these ends in their mutual connections is the activity of worship. It is this activity which is central in religion.

You may, if you choose, regard yourself as a neo-pantheist and take the whole of life to be your God. Then nothing less than communion with God can be central in your religion. In like manner, for traditional theism, the primary aspect of religion is communion with God. Communion with God or with your universe is more than an idea or belief about reality. It is belief accepted as a living faith; it is a sense of All Things vividly realized with a whole chain of spiritual and practical consequences; it is faith in action, conviction acted upon by intention to the farthest ranges of its meanings for life; it is the apprehension of All Being as the final good. For many, the worship of God, God as the whole of life, is the central and definitive action of religion. For everyone, whatever action of mind and spirit is directed towards a living harmony of truth and goodness and beauty, is not only a religious action but an action which is *central* in religion.

The centrality of worship is not the accepted view of Protestantism. Most Protestants regard beliefs in specific faiths as primary. For some, the sacraments are central. Others give the chief place to ethics. Many hold that redemption or the feeling of salvation is the essential experience of religion.

Roughly speaking, Christian churches are divided among these general types: the creedal, the sacramental, the ethical, and the evangelical.

Acceptance of a definte creedal formulary or set of beliefs is the prime requirement of several leading Protestant churches. Some of the largest Christian bodies—Lutheran, Episcopal, and Presbyterian—require adherence to a definite confession of faith as necessary for ordination to the ministry or the priesthood.

The intellectual is necessary for religion. Religion must have faiths, ideas, convictions. The practice of worship is impossible without some conception of the object or objects of worship. In the long story of religion, however, worship has never waited upon clarity of belief but has acted by the light it had, with effects both wide and deep in tribal and racial life. In actuality, beliefs have changed and are changing, but the pattern of worship does not change. As Jacob Trapp has said: "the basic emotions of the heart's worship are the same in all ages and all religions."

Ideas, moreover, however clear or true, do not become religion until acted upon by appreciation and by acceptance of the obligations they imply. Such inner appropriation and commitment is religion; its action is worship.

It is only in the grand religions of historic times that the conceptual has tended to surpass the ritual. In none of the great religions of East or West, have rites been more minimized and beliefs more magnified than in Protestant Christianity. Early in the Reformation, elaborate creedal formularies were fashioned. Religion was hardened into sets of beliefs, definitions of the mind. The primacy of communion with God gave way to the primacy of beliefs. Having abandoned the ritual worship of the medieval church, Protestantism turned into creedalism. It had the right instinct for something to tie to as a rock of stability, but it made the wrong judgment as to where stability is to be found.

Some Christian bodies emphasize the sacramental. The

Roman and Orthodox churches possess a major advantage in their systems of worship. Having the stability of a strong cult, they do not need also fixity of belief. From the point of view of their long practiced skills in the arts of worship, they are in a better position to develop the disciplines of worship as the main dependence of stability, thus affording a larger freedom for change in the content of ideas and ethics. The same is true for the Church of England and for the Protestant Episcopal Church in America. These have an incomparable opportunity for epochal advances in the conception and power of religion.

But such advances can never come if these churches continue to hold the creeds to be authoritative and unchangeable. Deep within the heart of worship is the effort at understanding and the hope of illumination. These can have little meaning if the paths of enlightenment are blocked by the barrier of fixed beliefs.

As in some churches beliefs are primary and in others the sacraments, so in others the chief place is given to the ethical. Many liberal churches, having disavowed any fixed content of belief, are strong in their emphasis upon good works. For them, Christianity is not a set of doctrines but a way of life, by which is meant, usually, the practice of the Golden Rule and ideals of brotherhood following the example of Jesus. Such an emphasis is admirable, but it does not always sufficiently recognize the necessity for creedal beliefs, however tentative or temporary. The ethical type of religion is often deficient, also, in the emotional values of life and religion.

Other liberal bodies are conscious of a wider spread of component parts. Without fixed beliefs, they yet foster a vigorous intellectual life and earnest moral endeavor. They have, also, a spiritual theory of rewards and punishments. Their religious basis might be summed up as the search for the truth, the service of the right, and the immediacy of the good. In actual practice, both public and private, they do put these component parts together. But mostly they fail to realize that when-

ever and wherever they put these parts together, they are there and then engaging in worship.

The liberal no less than the orthodox churches need to re-examine the question as to what is central in religion. They cannot long escape the conclusion that it is something deeper than either ideas or ethics. At last, it can be nothing less than worship.

Much of American Christianity, meanwhile, has been pietistic and evangelical. The central feature has been neither beliefs nor morals but the religious experience of salvation. To this type belong a number of early American communal societies, most of which have now disappeared. In these pietistic bodies, people gathered to practice the perfectionist or saved life. Similarly, a salvation religion was proclaimed at protracted meetings, camp grounds, and revivals. Much of recent theology has revived a redemptionist religion with its emphasis upon sin, repentance, and the divine grace by which alone salvation comes.

But just what is redemption? Where and when does it take place? In early pietism, it did take place as a definite mode of austere personal living and a close fellowship of brethren. But those communal societies had no adequate message for the general community as a whole, nor did they achieve an abundance of spiritual life within their own withdrawn and segmented associations.

The broader evangelical gospel was a powerful movement which enabled religion to keep pace with the rapid western spread of pioner populations. The Wesleyan evangel was better fitted for this great task than any other type of Protestant expression. In this revivalism, repentance was often followed by genuine regeneration and steadfast Christian living. It was sometimes followed by backsliding, and the emotional fervors succeeded by renewed indulgence or cold selfishness. In actual experience, redemption was not a singular event but a repetitive process.

And what is the redemption of modern orthodoxy? It is, of course, a complex of experiences. Modern theology has many profound and valid things to say about it. Yet for many, the chief meaning of salvation still relates to the future life. Salvation is for them more nearly a redemption from the consequences of sin hereafter than a deliverance from the love of sinning in this present world. The newer orthodoxy has not freed itself from this meaning. Its conception of judgment is not free from the taint of materialism. It comes closer to the idea of a divine manipulation of outer events than an inner and spiritual death of persons. Its power of grace seems a remote and divine decision rather than the actual existing "manifold of encompassing good." A spiritual salvation has not been proclaimed with enough clarity to reach very far among the churches. Nor is a full salvation being preached by modern orthodoxy. All over the world there is not only sin but ignorance and meagreness of life. One need not go far anywhere in America to find a Christian congregation that is shut up in a narrow house of the mind or of meagre apprehensions. Salvation needs to come to that house. Salvation includes truth and beauty as well as righteousness.

For the religious liberal, salvation is not something achieved once and for all long ago, to be received once and for all after death or received once and for all here and now. It is rather a process, a frequently renewed dominance of virtue, a gradual growth towards fullness of life.

In any case, all the varied evangelical and catholic meanings of salvation combine with present experience and thinking to disclose their ultimate end as the highest communion. This is true irrespective of definitions as to the nature of reality or the highest being. It is alike true, whether for humanist or theist or naturalist.

For the theist, sin is separation from God and damnation is separation from God. Redemption is return to God, such a return that thereafter the labors of life are not begun apart

from God, and in God find their end and full reward. The evangelical redemption is restored communion with God. This is essentially the meaning of the centrality of worship.

Precisely the same is true for the non-theist. Partiality is damnation and wholeness is salvation. The judgment for isolation is isolation. Connectedness, mutuality, the most complete and full accord and participation with all else is salvation. The effort to realize and project such harmony is in principle the centrality of worship.

It does not detract from the cogency of this thesis that it is applicable to religions of widely divergent beliefs. It would seem, then, that none of the main bodies of Christendom can avoid the logic which asserts the primacy of worship. Perhaps these bodies are not so diverse as a separation into types suggests. Each of the types includes traits of all the others. Yet the types do exist as having these varied emphases: the creedal, the sacramental, the ethical, and the evangelical.

Neither the creedal nor the ethical types can permanently maintain the primacy of that which is partial. They cannot make a comprehending category of what is but one phase of the religious life. The primary place must at last be given to that which is whole, to the experience and action which embraces all human experience, the worship of the highest, immediate communion with the Life of All That Is.

Those bodies which lay stress upon sacraments or upon salvation are closer to the truth of placing worship at the heart of religion. They, at least, seek an immediate encounter with God or the real presence of God. Yet that experience or that worship is too commonly marred or thwarted by bringing to it a body of beliefs regarded as final. The redemptionist seldom seeks a salvation which involves a transformation of the mind as well as of purpose and will. The sacramentalist, by retaining unnecessary fixities of belief, has hampered his own deepest experiences and highest arts.

The component parts of religion cannot stand alone. Their

interweaving is religious action, and religious action is worship. That action must accept the mandates and seek the values of truth and goodness and beauty. As an effort after completeness of life and action, it must seek to survey all the facts and factors of the outer world to the farthest bounds of being and to employ all the inner faculties of the personal self in their reach towards the highest fulfillments.

Worship does indeed take place in private prayer and public assembly, even when only half consciously recognized as such. To bring it more fully into consciousness, to study its methods and arts, to fill out its disciplines to completion, to see its powers and influences and realize its fulfillments, would be a great gain. It would be a gain for the fullness of worship as such and for all its component parts and their issues in practical life.

Beyond that, it would be of unmeasured value to the ecumenical cause. The centrality of worship is the only solution for sectarian conflicts and divisions. It is the one sure formula for achieving unity with diversity. It is the one aegis under which bodies of varied beliefs may be joined in the most profound of all human actions.

One step more. The ecumenical movement may one day set higher sights. It is now an effort to harmonize the religious life of specific churches and sects. Why may it not become an effort to harmonize the whole spiritual life of modern man and his societies? The centrality of worship is the one medicine for healing the breach between the spiritual life of concrete religion and the spiritual life of so-called secular culture. It is the sole conception by which those now barred by creedal requirements may be brought within the grand frame of religion, to the untold benefit of our whole spiritual and political order.

There will long be need for sects and differing religions. But the open way to closer accord among them is to diminish the stress on belief and enlarge the understanding and practice of

worship. Clear proclamation of the centrality of worship for all religion would open the way to new harmonies of religious fellowship all over the world.

The stability of true religion is the discipline of worship: one of its laws, the freedom to change; its constant mandate, the noblest right; its promise, hope and ever-present end, wholeness of life in communion with the Whole of Life.

IV. THE CENTRALITY OF WORSHIP

In Historic Cults

Within the imperial city of Peking is an altar which some regard as the most beautiful in the world. It stands under the open sky, a circular platform elevated upon terraces which surround it in concentric circles, each one mounted upon another, their spaces spread apart in multiples of nine. Enclosing the circles and marking the stairways that sweep up at the four cardinal points are balustrades of white marble, carved in mingled forms of clouds and dragons, as though to intimate the ultimate harmonies of the heavenly and earthly powers. To this altar once each year, after days of rigorous physical and spiritual preparation, came the emperor alone, there to make those offerings and prayers which were considered to be necessary to the fertility of the earth and the perpetuity of the state.

What is it that connects us with that object and the events which took place upon it? It seems to represent a religion totally different from ours at every point. Our ideas are different, our morals and our arts. It seems a far cry from a typical American church to the imposing rite of the Chinese religion. Yet what they sought to do is quite precisely what we seek to do. The one end and object of their religious action was to come into an accord with the final powers. We can do no more. We dare attempt no less.

The dramatic annual rite of the Chinese brings to mind the similar high point of the ancient Hebrew religion. It was only once each year, on the great day of Atonement, that a single person, the High Priest, entered the Holy of Holies, there to pray forgiveness for his own sins and the sins of all the people.

On that holy day, the massed throngs standing within the temple courts waited breathless to see whether their chief priest would return alive from the perilous venture into the presence of divinity.

It is obvious that in both these highly developed religions, the central and supreme effort was an act of worship. The prominence of the law in the Old Testament obscures for us the greater prominence of the cult in the actual Hebrew religion. The historic fact is that a system of sacrifices at various "high places" continued for hundreds of years before the appearance of the earliest extensive code of practical morals in the book of Deuteronomy. After that, the system of sacrifices became even more prominent as being centered and developed in the dramatic rituals of the Jerusalem temple. Except for the interruption of the Exile, from the time of Solomon until the razing of the city by Titus in 70 A.D., the worship of the temple was the central feature of Hebrew religion.

In the days of the Exile, a troubled people, bereft of lands and homes and holy temple, still possessed the law. This gave them courage to sustain devotion through times of despair. Yet after the rebuilding, the revised law again exalted the worship of the temple and the feasts of the year, until the cult of Jehovah became the heart and center of religious feeling for Israelites not only within the borders of their own state but scattered throughout the Graeco-Roman world.

After the final destruction of the Jerusalem temple, Judaism was preserved by the law and the synagogue. One need only visit any synagogue today to see this double power. In the synagogue, he will find enshrined a copy of the Torah. Reverence for the law has never been lost, but the shrine of the law is within the synagogue. Without the worship of the synagogue, the fate of Judaism would be doubtful. It is not without point that the word *temple* is now more commonly used than the word *synagogue* to designate a Jewish house of worship. That in itself suggests that in modern Judaism the

central effort is worship, and, one may add, freedom of worship.

Among different congregations, there are differing interpretations of the law. Hence, the law with its numerous annotations is not of itself an adequate instrument of cohesion. Clearly, the ultimate authority is not the law but the freedom to amend it or select from it the mandates that are needed today. That freedom is exercised and sanctioned not by the whims of individuals but by the common worship of the congregations in their temples. In other words, it may truly be said of modern Judaism that worship holds the central place.

All studies of all religions everywhere tell the same story. For thousands of years among innumerable clans and tribes of men, the chief demand of religion was the performance of some act of propitiation or sympathetic magic or thank offering or divination or other ritual action. Primitive peoples had extremely vague ideas and theories about the powers of the world around them. They had customs and taboos which constituted their morality. Such ideas as they had required rites of religious action, and the rites enforced the customs. It was the cult or system of rites that was the central and powerful factor of their religion. Only the correct performance of the rites of worship could effect those harmonies with the powers of earth and sea and sky necessary for the food supply, the warding-off of personal danger, and the safety of the tribe.

Modern archaeology has revealed the vast extent of worship in the ancient empires. Of remaining buildings that testify to the life of man in these civilizations, comparatively few are royal palaces or other secular structures; most are ruins of temples. Even the Greek theatres and stadiums, Roman forums and amphitheatres scarcely match in extent the temple architecture. The temples of Egypt were colossal in scale and clearly show the pervading power of priesthoods and the ritual character of the religion that sustained their power.

The religions of the Far East are essentially systems of wor-

ship, worship assuming many forms and related to varied, complex faiths and moralities. Everywhere among Buddhists and Hindus, Taoists, Shintoists, and even Confucionists, there are customary offerings at household and public shrine as well as at the great temples. Everywhere is the practice of pilgrimage to worship at some holy place. Everywhere are communities of priests or monks whose major occupation is that of meditation and prayer. In the world of Islam, the mosques are noble houses of worship where the faithful gather for common prayer. No other religion has developed such an extensive and universal system of worship as that of the five daily prayers enjoined upon every Moslem.

The worship of the East embraces, of course, the mental and moral elements of its several religions. These include important contributions to the intellectual and ethical values of mankind not yet properly appreciated by our western world. The spiritual riches of eastern religions are very great. Not all of their best values have filtered down into the understanding and practice of the common people. The question arises as to what moral advances have come out of the ancient and universal worship of the East.

We say, first of all, that progress in science and technology has developed not in the East but in the West. There is some justification for connecting the eastern lag with religious quietism. Easily we say also, perhaps too easily, that charity and justice are more prevalent in the West than in the East. The story of western charity is written upon pages that glow with the immortal light of Christian love. Nowhere are humanitarian enterprises and institutions so widespread as in the lands of Christendom. But the story of western justice and freedom is not quite so clear. It is probable that gains for the dignity and freedom of western man achieved in the Renaissance of the fifteenth century would have been far greater had they not been impeded by reactionary forces of religion in the sixteenth century. It is debatable whether the concepts of American

government may not owe as much to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century as to the rise of a few free churches in the seventeenth. Christian morality has not been sufficiently strong, after nearly two millenniums, to prevent the most disastrous wars in history, nor the rise of the most overwhelming tyrannies known to man. The very nations of Christendom that have pointed to the slow justice of the Orient have been at the same time engaged in ruthless exploitations of almost all the eastern peoples.

Eastern religions have afforded for their nations the social cohesion which only religion can maintain, and for their countless millions of devotees the personal composure and peace which only religion can supply. Much of our own religion has done little more. It has often preached a religion of comfort, but not of challenge. In many communities, the official church has passed by on the other side while its own members have been party to a racial discrimination that is one of the most cruel forms of injustice ever practiced by one people upon another. Until this condition is ended, we had better all be silent about the moral failures of religions east of the Euphrates and the Indus.

The East, meanwhile, is an awakening East. We are taking freedom and justice for granted, although some deep systems of authoritarianism remain and some ruthless forms of injustice are still widespread among us. The peoples of the East are thirsty for freedom and avid for justice. It may be that in the long cycles of history, the sleeping Orient will be stirred to achievements for the dignity of man nobler than our own.

Finally, as to the values of worship, the East long ago found, and now does not wish to lose, something closer to the highest fulfillments of the self than may be measured in terms of practical technology, which so easily leads to injustice. These are the fulfillments which displace the lower objectives of life by the higher efforts and satisfactions that are the experiences and actions of worship.

When we come to Christian history the story is much the same. Gatherings for worship very early became the chief centers of inspiration and the source of moral vitality for the followers of Jesus. It was not long before the customary common supper became the ritual Eucharist. There were, to be sure, vigorous intellectual movements and controversies among the early Christian churches; but after the Council of Nicea intellectual changes were not sufficient to alter the Nicene Creed, which to this day is given ritual recitation more than any other.

This does not mean that there has ever been intellectual or ritual uniformity in the Christian church. The Oriental and Eastern rites, the Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, and Greek liturgies, still maintain their distinctive variations. In the West, it was not until medieval times that the Ambrosian, Mozarabic, Gallic, and Sarum rites were merged into that of Rome. But it does mean that for long centuries, the common Christian has had little part in the intellectual life of his religion except to receive instruction. His chief religious duty has been to go to mass and perform the proper devotions. This is precisely as it should be. Worship is the primary act and duty of all religion. To it are brought all thoughts and doings for review and correction. From it flow all the efforts of good. Its teachings are the directives of virtue for common living. Within it are found the ultimate fulfillments of life. It is this which is the perennial strength of the Catholic churches, that they call their people to worship and require the performance of the several acts of devotion which comprise an acceptable sacrifice.

The Catholic centrality of worship has not abrogated the requirement of belief. Adherence to the creed and other dogmas is held to be essential. But that adherence cannot be controlled as can the performance of worship. In actual practice, it is not an act of belief but acts of penance and the act of communion which are the conditions of absolution. This is a fact of profound and auspicious significance. It means that the

largest bodies of Christendom, while still requiring beliefs, have nevertheless given the chief place to worship. It means that hereafter the Catholic centrality of worship may possibly become the subfoundation of a grand religion which does not require fixity of belief but rather solves in a permanent way the difficult dilemma of stability and change by the clear centrality of worship.

In Protestantism, the centrality of worship is not yet recognized. Anglican bodies with a definite liturgy may be well on the way towards that recognition. The confessional churches, having definite creeds, still maintain the primacy of beliefs. Other bodies, without either creed or liturgy, do not have any very clear conception as to what does have the chief place.

On the one hand, few Protestants would say that the church could safely dispense with public worship. Perhaps few would even say that any particular point of belief was more important than common worship. On the other hand, once inside the church, the worshipper often finds that a large part of the service is devoted to the celebration of certain faiths and beliefs. It almost seems as though the worship existed for the sake of the beliefs rather than beliefs for the benefit of worship.

Surely it must be the opposite. Worship is not for beliefs, but beliefs for worship. Beliefs are but steps by which one may rise to communion with God. It is not any concept of the mind but the action of the whole man by the spirit which is the fundamental of religion. That action is worship.

In all the long story of human religions, there is no more striking attestation of the centrality of worship than the societies of Friends. It would seem to be the opposite. At first glance, the Quaker meeting would appear to be the farthest remove from the elaborate rituals of the Catholic churches. On the contrary, from one point of view, the Friends stand with the Catholic bodies as over against most of Protestantism.

Among Quakers, worship is the undoubted heart and center of religion. The religious power of the Friends derives from

the common experience and practice of silent worship. They do not require agreements of belief. There are considerable differences among them, both as to theology and morals. Their common ground is the silent meeting. In the midst of their communion with God are inspired and formed those concerns for the welfare of their fellow-men which send them forth upon errands of mercy to stricken peoples anywhere. Within the meditation and prayer of the Friends meeting is born the courage to practice non-resistance or whatever other moral ideal may be chosen. Within the silent meeting is found the inner light that is both beginning and end of the good life.

Protestantism will one day come to a more clear conception of worship as the central action of all religion, and so to a new era of religious freedom and power. Cosmogonies and theologies, symbols and ceremonies, mandates and morals, are different in all religions. One thing is the same in them all—the meeting of man with his world as a whole, the communion of man with his God. Religion everywhere and in every time is primarily worship. It is the spirit of man seeking right relations with the final powers.

V. THE CENTRALITY OF WORSHIP

In Personal Religion

There is a vast amount of worship going on all the while which is not consciously recognized as such. This includes the numerous lesser worships of ordinary life, both good and evil. One youth worships his sweetheart, another his athletic hero. Men and women everywhere find many good things worthwhile, the goods that we call the values of life—knowledge, flower-gardens, music, friends, and others. Some appear to value wealth more than learning, or prestige more than character, and thus worship worldly success. These lesser worships are all true worships in that they are at once satisfactions and directives. They determine actions because they are considered to be blessings. They are not the highest worship because they are partial or incomplete.

Of higher worship, there is also a great amount constantly going on, often not recognized as such. This may take the form of the considerations that lie behind many decisions in life. In small decisions, of course, such as what to have for dinner, we do not take account of very many factors. Perhaps we should sometimes stop to consider whether those who produce our food are receiving a just reward for their labors, but we need not do this every day. In larger matters, more factors are considered. Where shall we send our son to college? Here a number of facts and questions need to be examined. In so important a matter, we may find ourselves approaching the point where we must try to take account of *all* the factors involved.

But "all the factors" is another name for God. We cannot safely make the major decisions of life except in the light of

the total situation. The effort to do so is essentially the effort of worship. No one knows all the factors, no one can fully conceive the total situation. But more commonly than they suppose, many people do attempt to determine the course of their affairs by the light of the Most High. This is the meaning of prayer, this is communion with God. As such an effort is brought more fully into conscious determination and practice, it becomes the heart and vital center of personal religious life.

This does not mean that a few brief utterances of petition will yield any very valid guidance upon the way of life. Nor, on the contrary, that brief prayer is futile. Even a momentary shift of attention and desire, sincerely made, will yield some guidance. The effort to consider all the factors is a longer and harder task. It is often lost in the demanding occupations of daily living. It is resumed in many odd moments of special circumstance or unusual talk. It may assume a strange intensity in the midst of quiet reflection when the mind is laboring to bring together its manifold experiences into some discernible harmony. Such effort is sure to bring forth something of clarity, resolution, and peace.

There are many, meanwhile, who make no such effort. The woes of the world are due largely to the blunders of those who fail to consider the total situation. Malefactors, from petty criminals to the aggressor tyrants, have not weighed the imponderables or tried to take account of all the factors. Countless ordinary people are less virtuous and less happy than they might be because they have preferred lesser goods to those of the great Beatitudes. They have said in their hearts, Blessed be the rich, Blessed be the fashionable, or even Blessed be the domineering. The love of lesser values and the lower worships of life can only be displaced by the worship of the Most High, by which alone can fullness of life and beatitude be found.

In ordinary daily life, many decisions, both minor and major, are made without any conscious effort to consider all the factors. They have to be made too quickly. They are made

with inadequate knowledge. But most of them are made according to certain principles which may be only subconsciously obeyed. Everyone has some such principles. Where did they come from? If they are good principles, they came from someone who at some time made a thorough-going effort to consider all the factors, to discover clues to the problems of right and wrong in the light of the Most High. All over the world, in the deeps of human consciousness, there constantly echo and re-echo the great voices that have called men to nobility of life. These are the long reverberations of direct and immediate communion with God.

Everywhere, also, among the followers of various religions, are those who engage in regular devotions. No one can know how common or uncommon is the definite and conscious practice of private prayer. There are undoubtedly numbers of religious people who regularly engage in some form of it. They may read selected prayers or make up their own in silence or take time for quiet meditation. Many of them offer only brief and simple petitions. Others have studied some of the famous directives or schooled themselves until their meditations have become high efforts of self-purging and high experiences of illumination. In any case, this communion with God is the very heart and soul of their deepest life. It is central in their religion.

No less widespread are prayers made in the midst of crises and unusual circumstances. A turning towards the ultimate is then a natural experience and effort. In time of trouble, disaster, suffering, failure, or shame, the cry of the spirit to the Most High is instinctive. De profundis, "Out of the depths, have I cried unto thee, O Lord." Why is this trouble? How shall I endure it? What shall I do? No answer can come in isolation. The effort to understand this thing cannot stop short of the effort to understand Everything. That effort is communion with God.

One of the benefits of trouble is a new urge to ask questions.

Many never ask ultimate questions until they are hurt. They do not seek to know the final powers until the shock of trouble rouses an angry protest or stirs a desperate demand for answers they have not sought before. This desperate curiosity is all to the good. The answer to prayer in time of trouble is always a little fuller understanding of the total situation, a little richer sympathy for others, a little larger grasp of All the Factors.

So also in circumstances of unusual good. In times of special happiness and exhilaration, there is a natural turning of the spirit to the Most High. There is a lift of the heart with thankfulness for the unutterable glory of life. There is a sense of the goodness of life, life as a whole, around and within. There is a fullness and love of life, all of it, the love of God. This, too, is communion with God. This, too, has its consequent demands. In the very midst of blessing and glory comes the remembrance of evil, especially the evil troubles of others. And so also, new determinations of virtue and good will. All this is far more than any definitions of the mind or merely intellectual judgments. This is the response of the whole being to the Whole of Life, this is bona-fide communion with God.

All of which accords with the words of Jesus himself. He did not say that the first and greatest commandment was to believe any proposition of the mind or obey any specific law or undertake some particular moral project; he said that it was to love God. That love, to be sure, was to be with all the mind, but also with all the heart and strength and soul. And he pointed out that the true love of God involves the loving of one's neighbor.

Thus all our experience of personal religion unites with the greatest of all teachings to find that its heart and center is communion with God.

VI. THE CENTRAL DISCIPLINE

The Structure of the Absolutes

Worship is more than one simple experience or attitude; it is a movement of the spirit among the heights and depths of life, to and fro from receiving to offering, from joy in the vision of all things in their sublime order to penitence for the broken fragments within and around us, from the absorptions of common affairs to the bright glories of illumination and the deep silences of peace, from the stark margins of isolation to the full participation of togetherness. It is a series of experiences and a series of their consequent actions and devotions. These actions become merged by the inner logic and force of their mutual relations into a definite structure. It is this structure which has stability and permanence. It is this inevitable sequence of actions which makes it a discipline. This discipline is the cultus or cult which is the heart of every religion.

The primary materials of the structure of worship are the religious absolutes: the spirit of truth, the spirit of goodness, and the spirit of beauty. For the constructions of religion, these are not like boards nailed together to make a building; they are threads of powerful energies woven into the fabric according to the design or pattern of the religious actions. These energies, each one an unconditional demand of religion, are none the less dependent upon each other. They do not become religion until their relations are realized and merged by the activities of worship.

This concept might be the more clear if we were to assume a gathering of persons seeking the meanings of life and the experiences of religion more or less *de novo,* without beliefs or projects already determined. They would have no back-

ground of common assumptions or faiths. They would then ask questions about reality, not only in its parts but in its wholeness. What is the truth about All Things? This would be a search for truth, morover, not only for its own sake but for its guidance. What is true, in order that we may determine what is right? What is true and what is right, in order that we may choose what is good? What are the best values? Can they be enjoyed irrespective of what is true and right? Having adopted a tentative truth and accepted responsibility for the consequent right, have we not thereby already had some experience of the highest beauty? A structure of worship is thus woven about the triangular pattern of the threefold imperatives of religion. Such a series or structure of actions is religious because complete. It is complete as embracing all the religious absolutes. Such religious action is valid worship. This kind of effort, apart from customary worship, is rarely attempted. Something which has the marks of its essence often occurs, however, when people fall into talk of ultimate things and together pass into a satisfying silence because they have touched upon the borders of fulfillment.

More frequent is the private experience of worship which comes unexpectedly in the presence of some beauty of nature or magnitude of art, of some heroic deed or stark tragedy. There comes a sense of the wonder and glory of life, a strange uplift into fullness of being, a feeling of mergence with all that has being. Without let or hindrance, the full spirit worships and adores the Life of All Things. Then may follow with the irrepressible force of a flowing tide, the full course of experiences and responsive actions that comprise worship in its completeness. That course may be stronger in tone but no different in meaning or order from that which unfolds in public worship as a deliberate action. It is that course which outlines the design or structure of worship as communion with the Most High. Its actions are more than religious thoughts or moral actions; they are religious actions.

Neither moral action nor religious thought holds the first place in religion. Primary in religious life is religion itself, the active response of the soul to God, the active effort of mind and heart to come into accord with the final powers.

Often in Christian thought, all too often, a passive view of religious experience is emphasized. According to this view, it is God who acts; man can only wait. The primary fact of religion, it is said, is not the action of man but the grace of God. Religion is indeed the experience of dependence, the experience of infinite good that is done for us or done on us, of goods that we cannot ourselves effect but only receive. These goods are all about us, the works of God in nature and the works of man in his societies.

But two further things need to be said about the doctrine of the grace of God. If that grace is identical with the sum of encompassing good, it might be called the primary thing in reality, but that would not make it primary in religion. Primary in religion is the response of man. If that grace is some supposedly voluntary act of God in selective approach to some man or group of men without which they could not be religious, then God would be a despot and man merely a puppet. If the doctrine of grace often preached in these days were true, then God would not be God in any worshipful sense, nor man be man with any modicum of freedom. Primary in all religions are the positive, free, voluntary acts of the spirit of man in the presence of his total good. This is worship. This is true irrespective of what terms describe that good, true alike for theist or humanist or naturalist.

The very words used to denote common worship testify to this view of religious action. The social or public expression of religion is called a ritual or the cultus; it is carried on by forms of words called liturgies. These are words of action. A liturgy is a public work, from the Greek *to work*. A rite is not a thought or a feeling but a *deed*, "a formal *act* or series of *acts* of religious or other solemn service." The word cultus de-

rives from *colere,* to till, to devote labor to. From the point of view of concrete, historical religion, the central thing in religion is religious *action.* Even Protestantism uses the word *service* of worship, meaning not a thought or a feeling but a *deed.*

Many students of the experiences and arts of worship have laid notable emphasis upon its character as active. Friedrich Heiler[1] says of the Roman liturgy that "its most distinctive feature is the performance of a sacred *act*—the *actio,*" which is the *act* of consecration by the priest "*acting* as the representative of Christ on earth." Evelyn Underhill [1] writes of three choices by which people may "unite in a common *act* of worship": (1) "silence which unites all the individual *acts* of devotion," (2) "the worshipping *acts* which can be *performed* by the leader alone in the name of all present," and (3) "the ordered ritual or liturgy, demanding religious *action,* from sense as well as Spirit, and so constructed that all present can take some part in that which is *done.*" In all these, the central element is *action,* not mere feeling, not mere thinking, but *doing,* purposive and decisive *activity.*

An Act of Attention

Public worship is customarily practiced by gatherings of persons who bring to it a common background of previous religious experiences and ideas and faiths. It begins by some pronouncement or exercise to bring these faiths into vivid realization. This requires some preparation or effort of attention. The initial action of worship, then, may be called an act of attention. This is a deliberate turning of the mind away from all things as "many" towards all things as "One." We go to church to pay attention to God. We pass through a door of leaving behind, where the pressures of practical affairs, the monotony of

[1] As quoted in "Religious Action" by Von Ogden Vogt, *Christendom,* Vol. VIII, No. 4, p. 525.

daily labors, the lure of pleasures, even the weight of responsibilities, drop away as we seek refreshment from the eternal springs. The many particulars of our manifold life are for the moment forgotten by the mind that seeks some comprehension of the universal order of life as a whole. This is an act of religion which may at certain times and places rise to the level of reverence and adoration.

In public worship, the performance of this act may be aided by noble music and architecture, or by declarative words of faith or a call to worship at the opening of the church service. Such a call or declaration naturally implies and expresses the conception of all things or of the universe or of God commonly believed by the worshipping congregation. It is not claimed that even this concurrence of surrounding aids and seeking minds will afford a clear understanding of the unity of life or an exalted sense of God. It is claimed only that a definite preparation of attention aided by favorable conditions will yield some valid truth for the earnest seeker and some blessed sense of the presence of God.

Those who may not be in agreement with traditional faiths can always undertake an effort to consider all the factors of life. Such worship becomes the effort to form some conception of the unity which holds the vast multiplicities of existence in their total order. This effort may lead the seeker for truth to the very verge of a vision of God. It may at least lead to a fresh realization of the totality of life. "There is a life enfolding our lives and all our fellow-mortals, from which we come, to which we go, in which all things natural have their being, by which all things spiritual are accomplished. It is the life universal of which we are a part, by whose laws alone are we enabled to do good, yet which is not perfected without us." [2]

For public worship, the opening parts of the service are of critical import. They must somehow assist the worshipper to "pay attention to God." Too commonly these parts are ex-

[2] *Services of Religion for Special Occasions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1938), p. 80.

pressed in traditional terms only, and thus tend to lose the sharp challenge of reality. They might well be sometimes phrased in generic terms, such as the above quotation. The varied possibilities of a Call to Worship, Introit, or Exhortation, with or without antiphonals of music, are open opportunities for vigorous liturgical composition and effective spiritual suggestion.

In ordinary public worship, it is not necessary to employ all these varied modes at any one time. The admonition type may be a brief statement of more prosaic character, yet challenging attention and concern. The Introit type may be more extended and poetic. It is distinctly declarative rather than urgent. It holds up the wonders of life to be apprehended and embraced. It declares the divine mercy and the rewards of virtue. It shows forth an infinite glory. Though its content of ideas or faiths must for any one occasion be extremely limited, its metrical forms and antiphonal rhythms may impart powerful effects of engaged attention.

An act of attention is obedience to the *mandate of truth;* it is the energy of the *spirit of truth* immediately operating. It is at the same time obedience to the *mandate of beauty,* for the truth it hopes to find is something to give order and beauty to the personal life, perhaps something of the beauty of holiness in the whole of life. According as these efforts have any spiritual success, they lead directly to the *mandate of goodness.*

An Act of Penitence

The next natural action of worship is an act of penitence. Whenever there is a strong sense of bigness, there is a corresponding feeling of smallness. Every magnitude of nature or of art has a double effect, of smallness and of greatness. Commonly, the first effect is that of belittlement. In its presence the beholder feels his own lack of talent or of power. So also a sense of God, the sublime and total good of all being, carries with it a sense of self-weakness and shortcoming. In the light

of God "we are ashamed of those greeds within us that have darkened our own souls, and of those selfish customs among us that have shadowed the lives and spirits of others." [3]

Modern theology has placed a renewed emphasis upon human sin. This emphasis is directed not so much upon the obvious weaknesses of the flesh as upon the faults of the spirit. The earlier church laid its penances on the hot passions of the body, which may destroy the individual. Now all our life may be destroyed by the cold passions of greed and power that cover the earth. No one can escape his share of guilt for the disastrous failures of modern man to maintain justice and freedom and peace.

It is clear that in public worship there should be a strong acknowledgment of guilt. In many churches, this is accomplished by a definite Prayer of Confession recited by the congregation. Such an act of penitence should not only acknowledge sinfulness in general but frequently specify wrongs committed and rights neglected. It needs to be so searching as to lead the worshipper to an honest self-examination and self-exposure. Such prayers, often repeated, may be a powerful influence for reviving the *spirit of goodness* and guiding it into channels of fruitful living.

When we think of public worship, we should include in its means and forms not only the parts commonly called the service of worship but also the sermon. It is largely by the sermon that the content of ideas and ideals must be specified. It is in sermons that people must hear just what and where are the great sins of our time and just what amendments each one may make for the betterment of himself and his world. Thus is formed a background of specific content which may give point and pungency to the prayers of common confession.

If we are to take seriously, as we must, the effort to realize our personal guilt and the guilt we share for the wrongs of our times, perhaps there should be in the church from time to time

[3] *Hymns of the Spirit* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1937), p. 18.

a special service of penitence. This might become a vigorous review of the sins of government and industry and of all evil customs as well as of personal faults and guilts, with periods of silence for penitential prayer.

Here must be noted another side to the problem of sin and penitence, a side which modern theology has neglected. Every magnitude of art or of nature has not only an effect of belittlement but also the opposite power. It is an appeal to greatness. It is an evocation of greatness because greatness is there ready to be wakened. By a kind of strange osmosis, the effect of greatness is greatness, the effect of goodness is goodness. There is greatness in man—in any man and in every man. Thousands of animal species have only feeble endowments of man's great powers. Man can remember; let him recall the great and the good. Man can reason; let him not sink into sloth of mind. Man can laugh; let him not fall into the rigidities of custom. Man can forecast; let him project noble creations of justice and freedom. Man can love; let him learn the high fulfillments of love to God and fellow-men.

Much of modern theology has taken the opposite view. It addresses itself to man as a mean creature, with small and contemptible powers. There is no such creature. The natural man is not mean but great, great in capacity and in natural endowments. He is a structure of such marvelous intricacy and order that any man may look upon any other human being with wonder and surprise and infinite respect. The appeal to meanness begets meanness; the appeal to greatness that is in man by nature is the best voice to call forth the greatness that may be in him by the *spirit of goodness*.

There is little transforming power in the mere emphasis on sin. There can be no acknowledgment of wrong except for a precedent knowledge of the right, no sense of sin except for a vision of holiness. It is only when the *spirit of goodness* is wakened that contrition and confession follow. No one feels humble or guilty merely by deciding to do so. We are rendered

humble by the presence of magnitude, and penitent by the presence of divine goodness in God or man.

At the lowest point of worship comes a change and a passing over to a high point. Every great work of art is vitalizing and empowering. It lays the spirit low and then lifts it up. It is the call of greatness to greatness. The *spirit of beauty*, which beholds beauty, becomes the urge to make beauty. Every visitation of God by his spirit shames the soul with contrition and then revives the spirit by the joy of salvation. What man deplores, he may abandon and correct. But with a far more subtle power, what man truly worships and praises today, that he will slowly but surely become tomorrow.

An Act of Praise

The next succeeding action of worship is an act of praise. Here we touch an all but universal action of religion. By some, religion has been described as the total response of the whole man to his entire world, in no matter what intellectual terms that world would be defined. That response, as we have seen, is often a feeling of humility and an act of penitence. Sometimes the response is one of resentment, or bafflement, or confusion, or indifference, or arrogance, or fear. But for the religious nature, life is good, God is good. Riches of many kinds—mental, moral, and material—lie everywhere at hand for the appropriation of man. Religion is praise and thanksgiving: "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise." We go to church not to listen or to criticize or to hear a sermon, but to give thanks. The central service of early Christians was the Eucharist or Thanksgiving, the whole ritual an action of gratitude for the blessings of life and the joy of salvation. Innumerable primitive rites were festive and celebrative, actions of rejoicing for the favors of the gods. No religious service can be good without an ample action of thanksgiving, a hymn or anthem of praise or one of the great Psalms

of praise read responsively. At this point in the service, choirs should not be permitted any other kind of expression, such as narrative or devotional works, but only that which represents the action of praise.

Modern religion needs more expanded actions of praise. There is open opportunity for poetic compositions to celebrate the glory and goodness of life. In city churches, especially, the beauty and bounty of nature should have more frequent and ample expression. And so also other factors of existence—man in his families, man in his vocational skills and loyalties, man in his civic achievements and cooperations, man in his apprehensions and arts, man in his struggles for freedom—should be praised in festival and song. Religion cannot properly blame the industry of this great age for its faults before it has recognized the marvelous advances of industry and celebrated its blessings for mankind. If many leaders of modern business seem blind to the human problems of mass production, it does little good to call them great sinners without more positive advisories as to just how those human problems may be solved. It is more constructive to celebrate the benefits of industry, and especially the developments in profit-sharing and authority-sharing which already begin to afford those recognitions of human dignity which must be accorded men in their labor.

The thanksgiving and praise of public worship must embrace the whole gamut of human goods, material and spiritual, personal and social, all the blessings and values of body, mind, and spirit, including the overcoming of evils, "light that is light and darkness turned to light." [4] For this celebration, there will emerge new works of poets and composers to carry on the grand praise of the church begun in the Beatitudes and the Te Deum. In common worship, the *spirit of beauty*, which beholds and celebrates the beauty of many several and separate goods, rises upon the wings of song to some vision of the beauty of All Things, the beauty of holiness that is God.

[4] *Hymns of the Spirit*, p. 57.

An Act of Recollection

In the midst of every mystic vision comes an intrusion of the practical, the memory of the ordinary world that was left behind. In worship the pendulum of attention swings

> Up from the world of the many
> To the overworld of the One[5]

and then back to the low point of contrasted littleness and fault, then again forward upon the full arc of praise for all goods to the Source of All Good, then inevitably back once more to remember the entire world in its manifoldness.

This act of recollection is most complex, often vague and fragmentary, often astonishingly complete in its coverage. It is in any case necessary to religion. This intrusion is a natural event in the mind, an almost inescapable process of reversed direction; it should therefore be accepted and turned to good account by deliberate activity. It is the attempt to bring together all the factors and forces of life for survey and review, to view and review and re-review all things. It is the effort to collect and recollect all our knowledge and experience and speculation, to estimate worths, to re-examine faiths, to judge among values, to clarify ideas, to weigh projects, to select purposes, to look upon everything in relation to everything else.

This central critical action of religion seems almost entirely lacking in primitive rites; it is feeble in most of the great cults; and it is weak and erratic amongst those who claim to be religious but who practice no common worship. It is strong amongst the free churches, indeed a conspicuous mark and glory of liberal faith. It is a considerable part of the effort of contemplation practiced by those religious bodies skilled in the arts of silence, not as a passivity but as an intense activity. The content of this process of recollection is literally all the world

[5] Von Ogden Vogt, *Art and Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948), p. 150.

carried along by memory in every retreat from the many and every advance towards the One.

This process is achieved in the services of the church by prayers, scriptures, and sermons. The lectionary of Biblical and other readings may present the whole range of human experience and reflection; it should include noble passages from both the religious and secular literatures of many peoples. The litany form of prayer is a vigorous method for the act of recollecting all sorts and conditions of men. The sermon, though it serves other purposes also, belongs chiefly among the acts of survey and review. This whole activity of recollection as practiced in the best public worship is more complete than the partial or fragmentary efforts of individual spirituality; it is disciplined by social reference to past and present, yet free, flexible, and open to the future.

In ordinary popular religion, the content of recollective action serves to broaden the base of life interests and concerns, it seldom effects notable changes in those concerns or judgments. If it were more thorough-going and stirring, it might sometimes raise sharp questions about the rightness of prevailing customs, as, for instance, in matters of race relations. Still less frequently does it raise questions about the major items of prevailing belief.

Yet the heart of the mystic experience is the birthplace of change. The world and all its affairs as remembered and reviewed in the midst of worship do not look the same as before. Values shift and change. Much that in the midst of common affairs seems important becomes insignificant. Other things not enough noticed before may emerge as among the highest values. When one considers the many usages and customs and habits that ought to be changed for the better and the many prevailing ideas that fall short of the full truth, one wonders whether the worship of the church is very often a true encounter with God, in that it brings forth so little change in the human mind. It is impossible to meet with God and

thereafter remain the same. Those who have entered the melting fires of a divine encounter have been so disturbed and shaken that their whole world has dissolved in movement and confusion, only to be freshly seen with a new clarity as an order more wondrous than ever they knew before.

In customary public worship, it is difficult to give liturgical expression to definite possibilities of change either in faiths or morals. Such considerations are normally proposed in the sermons of religious leaders. This is the prophetic function of the ministry. It is, however, possible to recognize in parts of the service prepared for congregational participation the desirability of amendment not only in morals but in beliefs, and the expectation of truer insights to come.

It must be warned that such new insights do not come as mere flashes of emotion or intuition. They have little validity except as built upon increases of knowledge and the slow processes of mental judgments. It is of this slow process of mental review that the act of recollection largely consists. In this process it must from time to time take into account factors of life not previously included. In this process, church religion often fails to reckon with the results of other disciplines commonly called secular. It has thus far failed, also, sufficiently to consider many values and validities long since discovered by other religions.

It must be warned also that even those who are willing to change both customs and beliefs must achieve some standing ground of ideas and ideals. That achievement is the very end and objective of the *spirit of truth* and the *spirit of goodness* and the *spirit of beauty* operating in the action of recollection. It may be that certain ideas and ideals will long stand as guides to life. But the true religious spirit knows that there is yet more light to come and holds its projects and faiths subject to the later illuminations of knowledge and the *spirit of truth.*

With these conditions in mind, the results of a true act of recollection become the guiding values of life. When these

values have been brought to focus and summation, they become an act of faith. In the efforts of worship, certain factors of life stand out as the highest, which then should be accepted and affirmed.

An Act of Faith

The selection and confession of faiths is a religious activity of the highest import. Amongst all the objects of religious survey, what are those that emerge as brightest and best? What are the most precious goods? Whatever we see to be of greatest value, those become our faiths, those become the immediate guides for life.

In many churches there is a creedal recital. Most of the free churches have abandoned this usage. Yet some specification of faith is necessary to religion. It ought then to be one of the regular customary acts of public worship. Some liberal churches have found it possible to undertake affirmations of faith of such variety and pertinence as to assure both freedom and vigor. They may be changed from time to time in order to express other important values or to guard against too much sanctity by mere repetition. These assertions are the full-blown results of the *spirit of truth* working with all its vital powers to achieve valid intellectual foundations for personal confidence and social order.

As an illustration of such a usage, the following affirmation of faith will seem limited to many, but for others will have the merit of acceptable realism and far-reaching moral implications.

> We are united in the efforts of faith:
> Faith in truth, in the growth of knowledge and of understanding;
> Faith in love, in the labors and rewards of friendly living;
> Faith in people, in the powers of men to build an earthly commonwealth of freedom and of peace;
> Faith in life, the life of all things that is the life of God, whose service is perfect freedom, whose presence is fulness of joy.[6]

[6] *Ordinary of Worship,* V (Chicago: First Unitarian Church).

The united recital of such a credo may be the very climax of the whole service, leading the worshipper once more to fix his thoughts upon the presence of the universal and the divine. Swiftly, then, the course of worship returns to common life, moving from the mandate of the *spirit of truth* to express the *spirit of goodness* in personal responsibility.

An Act of Dedication

All recognize the religious necessity for self-consecration. It is the final inner acceptance of responsibility and commitment of the self to the right. It is the supreme choice between good and evil. It is the decision of the mind and the willful determination of the whole being for the service of God. It is the end of the series without which the previous religious actions are of no effect. It is the *spirit of goodness* become regnant and decisive of projection into definite good works. It is the inner and pure action that is precedent to every outer and overt act of virtue.

In public worship, there may be from time to time a more extended office of dedication. Ordinarily, the use of Biblical or ethical texts for pronouncement by the minister or presentation by a choir, together with short prayers of consecration, may help make the offertory the true act of dedication it should be.

An Act of Communion

Finally, the whole action of public worship is an act of communion. Ordinary activities of life are means to ends, and those ends means to further ends. What is the end end? Some realization of fellowship with man and with God. In true religion, there can be no separation between the human and divine fellowships. They are one fellowship. All the great religious actions are not simply moral acts, actions between man and man, but actions between man and God. They must be

performed in lonely isolation as acts of the inner spirit. Yet they cannot be completely performed in separation from other men.

Togetherness is essential to the highest life of man. It is at once something received and something given, both an offering and a grace, at once human and divine. Where it is lacking, God is not there. Where two or three are truly gathered together, He is in the midst. Where He is in the midst, all mankind are there included. Where anyone has the love of neighbor, there is no limitation of numbers, for none are disbarred. Togetherness is the supreme binding and the perfect freedom.

There is thus a profound validity in the ancient doctrine of the *real presence* in the sacrament of Communion. It does not mean a transubstantiation of outer material elements but a transformation of the inner heart. It means that wherever any human heart offers itself in pure dedication to the good of all, there is the veritable presence of All Good. It is the echo of the Psalmist who declared that the true sacrifices are the sacrifices of thanksgiving and righteousness. It is the echo of the old liturgy of the Eastern church, where it appears that the true sacrifice of the rite is the inner self-offering of the worshipper.

These conceptions and faiths have long been expressed in the Communion service of my own parish. At the Offertory, which is the initial symbolic presentation of bread and wine, the minister says:

> Let the bread here set apart from the bounty of the earth be to us a token of all the good we receive and cannot ourselves effect. And let us with quiet hearts wait for that highest good of all, the presence and spirit of God.
>
> Let the wine here outpoured be to us a token of the self-forgetting good which men must needs do for others if they are to share the fulness of the divine blessing. And let us offer ourselves not to be ministered unto but to minister.[7]

[7] *Hymns of the Spirit*, p. 156.

The most ancient rite of the Christian church may be used wherever desired, to afford ever new experiences of truth and goodness and beauty and ever renewed devotions to their highest meanings and ends.

Not only the Communion service but every service of public worship may become an achieved manifestation of that fellowship of men in communion with God which is both beginning and end of the good life.

The Mergence of the Mandates

Through all these related and vivid actions of the spirit there move the powerful mandates of the religious absolutes. Now uppermost is the insistent demand, "What here is the truth?" Then, "What here is right?" Then, "What here is to be seen that is beautiful and good, or beauty to be made?" Their mingling is so deeply enmeshed with the actions which they propose and inspire that seldom are they separately recognized. Their objectives are so mutually engaged and interdependent that every one of the normal religious actions involves them all. If these mandates are the moving energies of religious actions, it is by the religious actions that they are woven into a fabric of the complete life which is religion.

Separately throughout all the ordinary everyday life of man, these energies move into the massive achievements of the secular arts and sciences. It is only when intermingled by the religious actions of worship that they become religion; and wherever they are so interwoven, there is religion. There is, of course, a sense in which any human action moved by one of these mandates is a religious action. The long labors of scholar or scientist to discover more truth in any field are truly religious labors. The faithful toils of any worker for the providence of his family are religious labors. Yet the objectives of truth-finding are not wholly in themselves but in their values for life, and the problems of material providence require the

guidance of ideal principles. The separate movements are but partial and incomplete until they are united in that discipline which alone is complete and which is religion in its fullness.

"So it is that a religion in which the cult is primary is possessed of a power stronger and more lasting than any of its component parts. Prophecy and morality, artistry and theology, each of these is essential, none by itself alone is sufficient. These cannot contain the cult; the cult does contain them. Each of these changes and is changed; that which changes them remains. Each of these is partial; that which is whole is primary. These are materials; it is the cult which assigns them their places in the formulation of a total and living design of religion." [8]

The Central Discipline

The actions of worship are thus not incoherent or vagarious movements; they fashion a definite and objective structure, a fabric of grand order and beauty. They comprise a discipline which is central in all religion because it is both beginning and end of the good life, because it is an immediate apprehension of the Most High veritably present and an immediate response of man with the full power of all his faculties directed upon the full range of all his apprehensions and obligations.

It is important to recognize the fullness and grandeur of the discipline of worship if it is to be accepted as primary in religion. Creedal standards have for so long held the central place in the bulk of Protestantism that it is difficult for many even to consider any change from that basis. It is rightly felt that religion must have some solid ground of dependence, some rock of stability which can be a sure foundation through all the changes of this mortal life. Hitherto that rock has been a specific creed or at least a group of established beliefs. It has been felt that worship is too vague and unstable an experience

[8] Von Ogden Vogt, *Cult and Culture* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 168.

to be the standard necessary for the security and guidance of religion. Quite the opposite is the truth. It is the creed which is unstable and the cult or discipline of worship which is secure.

The creed is, to be sure, a definite formation. Its parts are not incoherent, but mutually engaged to form a structure. But it is an unstable structure. When one of its parts gives way, the whole fabric is in peril. No one can look about upon sects and religions and fail to see innumerable disagreements about beliefs. No one can deny numerous changes of belief in his own as well as in other faiths. It is quite impossible to maintain the fiction of stability for creedal religion.

Not so as to worship. Not only is the discipline of worship a definite structure and an integrated fabric no less than is a creed, but none of its major parts are subject to loss or change. Through all the changes in ideas, the essential attitudes and actions have remained the same. These never fail. Particular ideas fade and pass away; the search for the truth abides. Specific projects are past and gone; the spirit of goodness remains to inspire and point out other efforts of righteousness. Amidst all the changes of the passing scene, the love of beauty is immortal. These are the imperatives of all religion; these are in very time and place religious absolutes. Without these, there is no religion. They are, as Emerson said, children of the universe. They are the unconditional demands of religion, and there are no other such demands. When they are combined by the actions of worship, they comprise a structure of security and permanence. The furnishings and furbishments of ideas and programs are changed from generation to generation; the house of prayer stands in all its fullness and glory. It is in very truth an habitation of God by his spirit, which abideth forever.

"When we consider what religion is for mankind, and what science is, it is no exaggeration to say that the future course of history depends upon the decision of this generation as to the relations between them. We have here the two strongest general forces (apart from the mere impulse of the various senses) which influence men, and they seem to be set one against the other—the force of our religious intuitions, and the force of our impulse to accurate observation and logical deduction."

Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 260.

VII. THE DAMAGES OF DOGMATISM

And now I must reluctantly turn to the other side. A positive and constructive proposal has been presented. As an alternative to religion based upon a formulary of beliefs, it has been suggested that religion be centered upon the discipline of worship—not a fabric of dogmas but a structure of spiritual experiences and actions. I do not suggest that such a positive proposal is a necessary precedent to negative criticism. Wrongs have often been denounced without the proposal of adequate alternative courses. But such is not the case here. We turn to the negative side of the present religious situation equipped with a positive conception of religion, validated not only in logic but by the religious experience of the race.

The negative side is a strange and tragic story, so laden with damages and dangers that it is almost impossible to overstate the case. At the very least it calls upon religious leaders to undertake a thoroughgoing review of their position and perhaps a drastic reformation of all their assumptions and usages. These, then, are the damages of dogmatism.

Dogmatism Fosters Obscurantism

The very first obscurity which dogmatism fosters is a refusal to admit its own nature. It tries to allege that it is no more dogmatic than liberalism: liberals also, it claims, have their own dogmas. Of course they do. Everyone holds dogmas in the sense of strong convictions, or ought to do so, possibly a considerable number of them. But that is not dogmatism. Dogmas become dogmatism when they are held to be authenticated by revelation, to be definitive and final, and to be required for religious fellowship. Liberalism does none of these things.

Liberals do often make the mistake of basing their religion upon particular beliefs or dogmas rather than upon immediate religious experience in the fullness of its form and structure. But they do not assert either divine sanction or finality for these beliefs. And in their actual practice, they do often achieve a deep fellowship among those of divergent beliefs.

To attempt to justify dogmatism by alleging that it does not exist, that it is no different in essential character from any other religious basis, blurs the truth. It darkens counsel and leads people into obscurity.

Another obscuring assumption of the orthodox critics of liberalism is to conclude that they have answered its spirit by refuting its content. This is a false alternative. Liberalism is not a content but a spirit. It has, of course, at any moment, a content of specific ideas and ideals. But these, though they endure for decades or for centuries, are neither final nor fundamental. The essential of liberalism is the spirit of truth, not particular truths nor specific projects. I do not here admit the validity of orthodox objections to the content of liberal religion as I have known it, for much of that criticism has been directed against mere caricatures of modern liberalism. Much less can we admit that liberalism has been shaken by the fire of its enemies, which has not even been directed against its essential nature but only against its contemporary substance.

A third obscurantist alternative is to contrast the religion of traditional theology with secular efforts for human betterment or with the ethics of Jesus, as though there were no other alternative. Christian liberalism is not based upon the ethics of Jesus but upon his religion. No clarity can emerge from a distinction which is not the matter at issue. This fallacy I have frequently observed. It presents a false alternative at the most vital point of Christian freedom and faith.

At these three points, strenuous argument against something which has only a shadowy existence, while ignoring the deeper significance of the true alternative for which it is but a

pale substitute, obscures the real issues, achieves but a meaningless triumph, and leaves people in the dark.

Older than these recent forms of obscurity is one far more damaging because it affects almost all the bodies of Christendom in their entirety. This is the adoption of ignorance as a direct policy. It has long been a commonplace among Protestants to charge the Roman Church with obscurantism. The very fact of the *Index* with its list of forbidden books confirms the charge. Authority is maintained by the maintenance of ignorance. The faithful are protected by denying them knowledge of ideas that may challenge the beliefs of the church and its authority. In many places, even the Bible itself has been withheld from the common people. If such churchly protection is universal even for American Catholics, it is in the Catholic countries all but complete for the whole people.

Protestants, however, cannot glory in religious freedom who are themselves guilty of fostering obscurity. As already noted in an earlier chapter, popular ignorance of the Bible is an ominous fact in American religion. The inhabitants of every village and cross-roads are familiar with the latest fashions and gadgets, but they do not know the Bible. The leading denominations are only just beginning to teach the true history of the Bible, and that so cautiously as to be still obscure. Considering the assured modern knowledge of the Bible and our ample means of communication, it is a scandal that so few Christians know anything about it. Many notable religious leaders are still seeking to maintain views of the Bible long since discredited by true scholarship.

Protestants do not, to be sure, have an *Index,* but most of them are almost as effectively protected from variant ideas. Their own church journals are well insulated against heretical views. In an age of prevailing dogmatisms, the secular press can do little more than keep silent. There is now no general religious journal which customarily prints presentations on the liberal side. Protestant orthodoxy, scarcely less than Roman, now uses

the technique of silence to maintain its position by a policy of popular ignorance.

A minority of church leaders, themselves not illiberal, hold that the populace is not capable of liberal religion. People, they say, need the old symbols and the old myths and the assurances of the old faiths. The sum total of this point of view in both Catholic and Protestant religion, from Chateaubriand to the present day, has been very great and very devastating. I believe it to be a gross untruth. Liberal religion can be made clear and satisfying to ordinary Christians anywhere. If the honest preacher will preach the positive gospel of the religion of Jesus, he will for ordinary parishioners supply all their need. Deliberate obscurity is not a necessity for popular religion.

Obscurity is inherent in the very nature of dogmatism. Once the major faiths are agreed upon and accepted as authoritative, there is little advantage in further knowledge. All the pressures are in favor of ignorance, and ignorance we have.

Dogmatism Encourages Duplicity

Widespread among American churches is the fact of compromise between the cold rigidities of required beliefs and the warm realities of original religious experience. Many young ministers, having accepted the dogmas of the church at their ordination, go forth to preach a far more living and beautiful gospel to the waiting people. In every sizable community are those who do not accept some of the major traditional faiths or assumptions. Many remain aloof from the church, not out of negligence but from conscience. Others, especially young people with children, support the church but with troubled minds. In this situation, some ministers are stiff and unbending. Others, more sensitive both to the needs of people and to their own deep religious life, endeavor to minister to the people where they spiritually live. These ministers are thus led to interpretations so widely divergent from the creeds as to be tantamount to

heresy. Official dogmatism makes this half-conscious duplicity, at once reprehensible and admirable, all but inevitable.

With older men and official leaders, such compromise loses all its condonements and becomes sheer duplicity. I have myself heard an elderly and gifted minister of a confessional church, when moved by the needs before him and his own intelligence, proclaim as the essence of religion something close to the religion of Jesus. He would have been horrified had I suggested that such was not the essence of religion according to the creed of his church. I have recently heard also, during a public discussion by leaders of a creedal church, something like this, "You need the stability and dependence of the creed to guard against the vagaries of belief that so easily prevail." And then, as they remembered possible disagreements, "Of course, we do not believe it just as it stands; it can be given wide interpretations." Yet brethren of these men, at about the same time in a neighboring state, said something quite different: "Oh yes, we do believe it," and for heresy thrust one of their number out of his pastorate. Quite lately also, considerable publicity has been given to Lutheran trials for heresy.

I am not objecting to heresy trials. On the contrary, under existing rules, there should probably be many more of them. What I am objecting to is the existing rules. It is a vast damage to the church and to religion that it should require of its ordinants such a list of hard and fast beliefs as to reject some undoubted Christians, cast out others, and encourage in all the duplicity of extensive variation.

This tendency toward duplicity sometimes returns like a whiplash to plague its perpetrators. It is reported that at a certain college, one of the ministers to students in a nearby religious foundation had been severely critical of student deviations from moral standards. But they said to him, "What we have been doing is what you yourself have taught us. You have said, 'Yes we have a creed, but it is a very general standard that can be given wide interpretations.' We have been doing just that."

In some confessional churches, a far more subtle duplicity permeates the whole system. It is hardly more dignified than a clever device to enjoy the benefits of dogmatism without paying its price. In these churches, ordinary members are not required to assent to the confession, but ordained officials are, both ministers and elders. Many unsuspecting people are won to adherence on the more free basis only to find that if elected to high office, they must subscribe to the whole creed. And meanwhile it has escaped their notice that although they have not accepted the confession for themselves, they must sit under the teaching of a minister who has. They were won to Christ, but they have become unconscious and unintentional supporters of dogmatism. The creed is the actual required basis of religious fellowship, though not the basis of recruiting. This is a double standard; it is duplicity at the very heart of the whole church itself, duplicity not easily recognized and thus the more dangerous and damaging.

This double standard has been frankly admitted in a paper by Elwyn A. Smith in the *Christian Century* (April 25, 1956) to be an unsolved problem of integration in education, especially for teachers of religion. "Some university professors of religion claim no church faith and regard themselves as scientific investigators. Oppositely, there are theological professors whose obligation to a point of view overwhelms and subverts their scientific training. But relatively few men engaged in the education of ministers stand at these extremes. Most are loyal both to a confessional position and to the scientific principles to which they have been trained and by which alone they can produce reputable scholarly results. Yet these two loyalties remain unreconciled . . . the intellectual cleft persists." Mr. Smith admits that the typical theological professor tries to carry water on both shoulders and thus practices a stark duplicity, unable to "see the recharging of the church's witness and his scientific work as a single pattern of faith and vocation."

The temptation to duplicity is inherent in creedal religion.

If some leaders are dogmatists by nature and readily fit the pattern, many others listen to the sounds of the wind of the spirit that bloweth where it listeth, that never ceases to plead for growth and change and the light of newer thoughts and ways. Creedalism breeds duplicity. Commonly it is not conscious deceit. It is half consciously justified on the one hand by the need for pedagogical methods, the need for poetry and myth, a tender regard for saintly sensibilities, and on the other hand by the growing enlightenments of people not satisfied with the old answers.

The way out is to abandon creedalism altogether and undertake the practice of immediate religious experience and action. Such a procedure would justify and retain much of the old and at the same time open the gates to all the new that commends itself to the mind and heart of living faith.

Dogmatism Confounds Education

The sickness of education is this: it cannot educate without religion, it cannot educate with dogmatic religion. Dogmatic religion is the confusion of education. Education, both higher and lower, is stymied and frustrated by traditional religion.

The dilemma of religion in the schools is not chiefly the Catholic problem. The Roman authorities, properly recognizing the necessity of religion in education and dissatisfied with the merely secular education of the public schools, have established their own parochial school system. Yet still having a residue of their children in the public schools, they must oppose in those schools any other religious education than their own. To Catholic religion in the schools, both Protestant Christians and Jews are opposed. To Christian dogmatics, both liberals and Jews are opposed. What then becomes of religion in the schools? What then becomes of education without religion? It must perforce be something truncated, something less than that fullness of life to which every child has a right to be trained.

I am not unaware of some of the most difficult problems of the relations between education and religion. Even assuming full freedom of thought and action, there would remain many baffling questions which only the future, perhaps the far future, can answer. But the way to these answers cannot even be entered until it is cleared of obvious obstructions. Should there develop in the world of religion a grand movement towards the transformation of its basis from tradition into the operations of living experience, the way would be opened towards a more complete mode of popular education.

The case of higher education is no less confused. The huge state universities, being tax supported and public, must at least for the time being remain completely neutral in the matter of religion. Gathered around them are numerous denominational foundations for the care of their own constituencies. This is in itself a condition of confusion rather than of unity and integration.

Of smaller colleges, a few remain under churchly control and follow the faiths of their ecclesiastical authorities. A large number, originally church inspired and supported, are now independent but still provide both for religious instruction and worship. In some of them there exists a definite cleft of spiritual life. There is one set of fundamental assumptions in the college chapel and a different set in the college laboratories. Such a condition cannot produce the integration of mind and character that is one of the major ends of education. The student is presented with a dreadful dilemma. He must either choose a partial solution or become a divided soul. These colleges cannot permanently suffer such a cleavage. Open before them is the alternative of developing their own college religion, such as will harmonize research and faith within the fundamental actions of religious thought and worship. Among these colleges are a few which have tried just this independent and fruitful course. Yet they are not entirely free of dogmatic troubles. I have heard one president of such a college bemoan his situation where his

very effort of integration is bedeviled by sectarian establishments round the fringes of his campus, definitely hindering rather than helping his great project in the unity of life.

Other colleges, larger and smaller, without either sectarian control or a religion of their own, seem content to unload the problem upon the churches. They have a chapel with preachers from different denominations, or several chapels for the major churchly types. This system, seemingly so tolerant and inclusive, merely evades the issues. It still confuses and does not educate. It fails to achieve either the integration of authority or the integration of freedom.

The heavy weight of ecclesiastical pressures upon education is admittedly great. Every college and free university feels it, for it is almost identical with the bulk of its own alumni. University officials may well say, "It is not for us to set up any view or practice of religion divergent from religious authorities. Let us rather put the matter in their hands." This sounds like piety; it may be closer to compromise.

Neither philosophy nor science can bow to numbers. Numbers may be wrong. Numbers of Christians regard large numbers of Buddhists as in the wrong. Numbers of Protestants hold larger numbers of Catholics to be wrong. Protestant dogmatism, large as it is, may be wrong. The future lies not in compromise with the numbers of dogmatism, but in the maintenance of those free explorations in every field of knowledge and experience which are the glory of the university and must at length be woven into the fabric of religious action by the church. The academy too, as being free of ecclesiastical control, can undertake its own pioneer and fruitful expressions of the complete life which is religion.

The same confusion which confounds the purity of education in schools and colleges is becoming manifest in theological education, especially in relation to the university. Long present in some of the most distinguished divinity schools, it has lately become more acute in others. Princeton University, having been

from the beginning closely allied with a confessional church, has had throughout the unity of a creedal religion. Union Theological Seminary, with one of America's strongest faculties of religion, not being directly under any university administration, does not suffer the dilemma which comes more sharply into focus elsewhere. It must in the long run obey the canons of the religious absolutes. But as an independent institution, it is at all times free to proceed upon lines either traditional or liberal without prejudice to the canons which must prevail throughout a university. Yale University, one of the oldest of the leading academies, and the University of Chicago, one of the youngest, both of which were notable not long since for liberal religious teaching, have lately made appointments to faculty membership of those who must clearly be regarded as belonging to the dogmatic school, being in some instances clergymen of confessional churches.

The significance of such appointments becomes most clear as it appears at Harvard University. The action of Harvard does not differ in principle from that of several other universities, but its meaning is more clearly seen because of the peculiar simplicity of the Harvard motto and shield, which thus becomes a symbol of this problem. The motto raises difficult questions. It did not formerly raise these questions. In my own city, hung high upon the walls of the dining hall in the University Club, are shields of several leading colleges and universities. There one may read the Harvard challenge, clear and bold, the single word *Veritas*. For generations the great college has held before its gaze the stark simplicity and purity of its prime ideal and function, *Truth*.

It is only lately that questions have appeared. They are raised by the recent project to expand the Divinity School and gather a large sum for its financial provision. To these ends, two large committees of prominent churchmen were enlisted, to raise funds and to nominate new members for the faculty. Several new appointments have already been made. Among

the men on these committees and their appointees are several members of confessional churches. All this at first glance seems simple enough and most admirable. But second thought compels attention to the major premise of the university—any university.

Harvard, like most American colleges, began as a Christian college. Slowly, during its more than three hundred years, it became a university. The college function of education for life and for service "in church and state" was expanded to include professional schools and departments for graduate studies and research. For such an institution, a true academy, a university in the full sense of its universality, one oath is required and only one: loyalty to the truth. So far as that goes, many would hold that the same should be required of teachers in undergraduate colleges in pursuing their function of education for culture and character.

I know of no university where those chosen to the faculty are required to make any formal oath. But our common understanding and expectation is that they take a tacit oath of loyalty to the truth. Surely we are all confused if such is not the case. If we cannot depend upon university scholars and scientists to report their findings as accurately as possible without regard for the consequences to themselves or anyone else, we cannot have civilized life at all. There is often unintended human error; the margins of accuracy in some regions are far less clear than in others; differences of opinion are common. We cannot expect or demand completely errorless results. We can expect and must demand that every report be unmodified by any qualifications whatsoever of the full truth as it is honestly apprehended.

In a free country, we cannot prevent vagarious publications by independent individuals. To do so would be the end of our freedoms. Nor can we avoid in our popular life enormous propaganda on all sides, on all subjects. In our present economy we cannot prevent the spending of untold millions for

commercial advertising. Nor in the field of religion shall we quickly or easily emerge from the solid formations of ecclesiastical life in competing dogmatic camps. When one considers the continual bombardments that modern man must endure, it is a wonder that he can maintain his equilibrium at all. When one considers that among all these approaches, few are disinterested, few undistorted, few free of prejudice or special pleading, how infinitely precious are the fortresses of truth in its purity.

The university is our chief refuge for disinterested investigation and unprejudiced thought. It is the one organism that can select and gather some of the best minds for the service of pure science and pure scholarship. It cannot gather men completely free of prejudice or the natural distortions of temperament and talent. It can fulfill the function of maintaining in our complex and confused society one center of intellectual fidelity and security. It can screen its members in order to assure as fully as possible that they be free of pre-judgments or extraneous commitments of any kind. This function and our dependence upon it applies no less but rather more in the fields of philosophy, religion, ethics, and esthetics than in those of the more exact sciences. I say more because these are the fields peculiarly open to differences of estimate and opinion, where the personal equation is often decisive. In these as in all other areas, the whole propriety and fortune of academic freedom rests upon unalloyed loyalty to the truth.

The first question, then, is this: Are we right or wrong in expecting that every member of the academy assumes a tacit oath of loyalty to the truth, unqualified by any other consideration whatsoever? If we say that we are wrong, then we have on our hands some further questions that will be exceedingly difficult to answer. To say that we are right raises a grave question as to the Harvard procedure.

It happens that among the persons chosen for the work

of scholarship and teaching in the expanded Harvard school of religion are one or more who have already taken a somewhat different oath. They have at some previous time stood before an ecclesiastical court and sworn loyalty to the truth, *as it is in the Presbyterian Confession,* or other creed. This, I assert, is not the same oath as loyalty to the truth, *period.* This is not a case where the university might be in reasonable doubt as to pre-judgment. It is a case of known and specified pre-judgment. Nor is it a case of someone holding the beliefs of orthodox theology who is yet free to change them; it is an instance of those who have specifically sworn adherence to those beliefs and may be tried for heresy should they abandon them.

The other question is this: By what right or justification may a member of the faculty in the department of religion be excused from the oath required of every other university professor? This, I believe, will be a very difficult question to answer. If there be men who have already sworn adherence to a creedal confession, it is not here a matter of their intelligence or piety, their talent or their humanitarian concern. These are not in question. They are assumed to be of a high order. The question is: What shield do they wear? If they can in honesty exchange the device of Nicaea or Augsburg or Westminster for the shield of Harvard, well and good. If they try to wear them side by side, that is intellectual confusion. If they wear one covering the other, that is moral confusion.

For the study of dogmatic religion, universities may and do invite church leaders or scholars to present their ideas and standards in series of lectures. They would then appear under their own insignia and not with the sanction of university status and membership. This practice might well be expanded to include representations of Catholic faiths and indeed of other religions as they are now developing. There are lively and promising movements of spiritual life amongst Hindu, Buddhist, and Moslem leaders concerning which American students of

religion should be better informed. There are depths of experience and treasuries of devotion in the Greek and Roman Catholic churches which should be opened to our Protestant schools.

The question arises: Do such researches require appointments of priests and teachers of these bodies to faculty chairs in divinity schools? Such a procedure has been seriously advocated by certain churchmen and professors, both liberal and conservative. There is much to say for such a policy of electicism in religious education. It seems at first blush to be a new stage of religious advance in which divinity studies and the companionships of scholars may become more broadly tolerant, more truly catholic and ecumenical.

The proposal, however, revives the old question of toleration. What are its wise limits? Can it be a one-way street? Will those who advocated that Harvard establish a chair of Catholic divinity apply equal urgence upon Princeton to appoint a Humanist or Notre Dame a Unitarian? I do not imply that liberals should await or demand a full reciprocity of tolerance or decline all its risks. I do warn of dangers involved. Thomas Jefferson long ago expressed a confidence that errors cease to be dangerous "when it is permitted freely to contradict them." But just there is the rub. Dogmatist domination in some divinity schools has all but closed the doors to contradictions. The freedom to hear contradictions is slowly disappearing throughout our whole nation.

Still other questions remain. Can the university properly give sanction within its own frame and structure to any teaching avowedly dogmatic? Can it for any reason relax its primary requirement of loyalty to truth unmodified by extraneous commitments of any kind? Should chairs devoted to the exposition of Catholic and other faiths be established as suggested, the incumbents would be chosen as representing ecclesiastical bodies. The appointees, to be sure, would be men of learning and character, but the underlying canon of selection would be their status as representatives of some religious body. How extensively

would this canon operate? Would it include Jehovah's Witnesses? Or Christian Scientists? Would these be rejected because they are few? Or because the university regarded their teachings as too far afield from the normal standards of learning? If the latter consideration enters at all, then the canon of representation fails completely, and the decision falls back upon the purity of truth, where it belongs and which should not ever have been abandoned.

Adequate acquaintance with the great Catholic traditions does not require the appointment of their representatives to faculty membership nor the endowment of exclusive chairs for their study. The wiser course would be a program of invitations to lecturers, as already suggested. The guest teacher may proceed with an open mandate to expound his faiths freely without embarrassment to the foundation canons of the university structure. But once a university accepts funds for the endowment of specific teaching, or accords faculty status to bounden dogmatists, it has begun to weaken the canons upon which its own freedom rests.

The proposal for Catholic representation should not blind us to its wider implications, but rather help to clarify the underlying problem of dogmatism in universities. Aside from competence, what is to be the principle of academic acceptance or rejection for teachers of religion? Is it to be representation of church bodies? This is, in effect, the principle upon which university divinity schools have lately been acting. In some of these actions, the principle has crept in unnoticed. I know of no university whose governing authorities have given deliberate consideration to the nature and consequences of sectarian representation. But a theological school based upon this principle cannot create the superior religious discipline which humanity so desperately needs, it can only reflect the mediocrity and the dogmatisms so prevalent in popular religion.

If, on the other hand, one of the principles or testing canons be unalloyed loyalty to truth, the theological school will

reject Protestant no less than Catholic dogmatists. Dogmatism is the love of particular beliefs as truths rather than the love of truth in general. It is allegiance to some authoritarian creed. Its marks or tests are the same for the college as for the church; the holding of certain beliefs as validated by special revelation, as final and definitive, and as required for ordination. All of these are in some degree incompatible with the tacit university oath of unexceptionable loyalty to truth. But it is the third which is the decisive factor. One may hold the others and yet be free to change. But one who has overtly testified his creedal adherence before an ecclesiastical court is not free to change unless he resigns his clerical standing. Certain universities have given faculty status in the department of religion to those who have previously bound themselves to specific church creeds and remain under that oath.

I am not here making light of the great church creeds. I am taking them seriously, and suggesting that university authorities and divinity professors do the same. It is a grave question whether the university as such can for any reason safely excuse any member of its faculty from the pure and unmodified oath of loyalty to truth. Many minds will hold that dogmatism and the university cannot be merged. To attempt it is confusion and not integration of mind or wholeness of spirit.

The deepest confusion in popular education would vanish with the end of dogmatism. Complexities, difficulties, long efforts to conceive and establish new formulas of theory and usage—yes, these would still be with us, but not the confounding of all our labors by the impasse imposed by dogmatic religion.

For higher education, there is an open field: the formation by any college of its own free religion. The chief ingredients are at hand. It needs only the religious actions of mergence and total expression to bring them into harmony and fullness of structure. These ingredients are everywhere the same. They were outlined in the address of Dean James Hayden Tufts on

the occasion of the laying of the cornerstone for the new chapel at the University of Chicago in 1926. Speaking, as he said, at a time "when science is only in its beginnings, and new reconstruction in religion yet to come," he suggested that the eternal values of truth and goodness and beauty must ever be the foundation elements of religion in the academy as in the church. For a vision of such a grand religion, I commend this noble address to all academic authorities. It is an almost complete chart of what can and should be the academic policy and ideal respecting religion.

Both the needs of public education and the purity of higher education are confounded by dogmatic interferences. The way to freedom is open. It is hoped that many brave men will take it.

Dogmatism Promotes Aggression

The spirit of evangelism is a pressure for missioning. With the assurances of a gospel to tell, comes a mandate to tell it. When the assurances of one sect differ from those of another, there is likely to be competition not unmingled with a taint of aggression. There is now little evangelism that is free from accretions of belief which turn the pure gospel into a species of dogmatism, and lead to aggression.

The definitely confessional churches are powerful organizations, each one loath to yield advantages to others in the competition for places in the sun of popular favor. This is all but inevitable when large groups of people honestly believe that their particular set of faiths is the truth and the necessary basis of true religion.

Almost all observers acknowledge that many American towns have too many churches. The common power that might support one or two strong and healthy centers of Christian life is divided into weak and struggling groups, attractive and inspiring to very few and impotent for the deep functions of

religion in society. These divisions are in part maintained by the stubborn convictions of local individuals. One sometimes hears the macabre jest, "What we need here is a few funerals." It is admitted also that there are important values in the experience and witness of differing sects, which would be lost in mergers. But neither special values nor local stubbornness could maintain our present situation without the encouragement of general church officials. Their intrusions are responsible for innumerable deplorable and debilitating competitions, for which local communities have long paid a heavy cost.

In new communities, national organizations not seldom frustrate local desires and hopes. In some flagrant instances, the people themselves have prepared the way with enthusiastic efforts towards the establishment of one strong community church transcending sectarian differences, only to be thwarted by the aggressive actions of denominational authorities.

It has been alleged by sectarian advocates that community churches do not succeed. Of course they cannot succeed where those sectaries cause them to fail by introducing their separate movements. Recently in a Florida city occurred a most deplorable instance of such interference. A synodical official of the Presbyterian Church approached the deacons of a flourishing Community Church. He suggested that their church might forestall the establishment of a Presbyterian church in their city by becoming a Presbyterian-Community Church. I can admit that such a cognomen might have a very slight validity in some small place where there was no other church. But in that city it would have been a downright misrepresentation. The very title is a complete contradiction in terms. Some local members, misled by this sophistry, favored the idea. It was pointed out to presbyterial and synodical officials that a number of the members of the Community Church who were formerly members of free churches or Quakers and thus opposed to any creedal church could not possibly become Presbyterians; and that some of these members had labored for ten, twenty, or

thirty years in their beloved church. The heartless rejoinder was that the loss of a few would be no great matter. Despite the warning, the officials pursued their infiltrating agitation in a definite effort to take over the entire assets, physical and spiritual, of a thriving parish. In their fanatical dogmatism, they disregarded completely, not only the fate of many worthy persons, but the deeply cherished values of an established free church and the ecumenical values of a community church. I do not question their right or perhaps even their duty to establish in that city a new and proper Presbyterian parish, but there was no conceivable right in their attempt to do so by the destruction of a splendid existing church. Fortunately, they failed, but not without dividing the old church and causing much bitter feeling. In a long life of familiarity with ecclesiastical affairs, I have never seen such a flagrant instance of sheer misrepresentation and ruthless aggression.

For that whole unrighteous action, no denominational officials, from presbyterial levels up to the national board that supplied the funds, can avoid responsibility. How shall we explain such an action by professed Christians except that they had become so completely immersed in their dogmatic propaganda as to render themselves impervious to the rights of others and blind to the possibility of any other valid faiths. The spirit of ruthless aggression is one of the damages of dogmatism.

Dogmatism Disbars Seekers

Long ago in a far country a system of religion became so exclusive that common people were disbarred from it. So numerous were the requirements of its laws that those who were busy with the daily labors necessary for livelihood could not obey them. The tests were not the tests of faith and virtue but rather lists of burdensome things to be done. A great leader of that time refused to be party to such a cruel system of disbarment, and for his pains, lost his life. His name was Jesus.

The religion of Christian dogmatism is precisely the same in principle as the religion of Pharasaic legalism. The tests are not those of faith and virtue but rather a list of things to be believed. As, long ago, friends of Jesus were turned away by a barrier of things to do which they could not perform, so followers of Jesus today are turned away by the barrier of things to believe which they cannot accept.

One of the unnoticed facts of American life is the difficulty of liberals in finding religious fellowship. In thousands of towns and cities, they find no avowedly liberal church. It may be merely uncomfortable for old people like myself; for young families it is a grave problem. Many who would like to go to church feel themselves disbarred by definite dogmatisms they cannot accept.

Students of society are becoming more and more acutely aware of the isolation of the individual. It is more difficult than formerly for him to find a home of the soul. The concentrations and resettlements of population necessitated by mass production, the mobility of families attached to national-scale corporations, and other factors have made it less easy for persons to belong and feel that they belong somewhere.

In this situation, the church is more valuable than ever before. Better than any other institution, save only the family, it can supply the opportunity for togetherness which is the most profound of all human needs. God is our home; here we have no continuing city. Yet upon this good earth, the house of God and the household of faith may be for us a genuine home of the soul, the scene and center of orientation and fellowship, the place of belonging.

That is, if we can get in. It will be asserted that anyone can get in, that the church is open to all equally. So it seems to those on the inside. They are largely unaware of the barrier they have erected which keeps innumerable people out, a qualification not of pure faith or active virtue but of a list of things to be believed by the mind, impossible for many to accept.

Of those who do get in, many are uncomfortable. They do not feel truly at home. They go to church to say their prayers and receive the benefits of all who worship together with others. They go, also, to support religion which they know to be necessary for the social health of the whole community. But they are still barred from the fullness of life and communion which can come only with accord on the highest levels. They feel themselves in a kind of limbo of half-hearted communion. Sometimes they question whether they may not be wrong rather than right to support a teaching the principles of which they do not approve. If there are not large numbers of these, their numbers are at least considerable.

Others, and more of them, enter the church without much analysis of its intellectual assumptions. They feel it to be the cause of righteousness, they are touched by the spirit of Christ, their loyalties are deeply engaged with the general values of the Christian life. But slowly, without their being aware of it, they become fixed in a habit of thought that revolves round the dogmas of the church. The reiterations of hymns and prayers and doxologies and sermons become the furniture of the mind. They are being brain-washed. They no longer realize what they have lost. They are not shut out, they are shut in. Their house of faith does not include the great discernments of the arts and sciences, it is not open to the winds of the spirit that move in the full activities of men and nations. Their home of the soul is not the high house of God, but the narrow house of dogma.

No one can measure the total disbarments of dogmatism. It brought tragedy in Jesus' day; it may bring disaster in ours. For a specific instance of its operation, one may turn to the *Saturday Review of Literature* in the issue of December 18, 1954. There Mr. Reinhold Niebuhr defines Christianity in dogmatic terms. In a subtle and brilliant argument, he presents several of the chief beliefs of orthodox theology, including some ordinarily held by liberal Christians. These, he asserts, com-

prise a final and definitive faith. The argument begins by alluding to a "discussion in a group of enlightened moderns." Some of these men expressed interest in the Jesus of history. One gathers that they might even have echoed the ancient cry, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Perhaps they might have been led to say, "We would follow Jesus." Their interest, to be sure, seemed to be only in the ethics of Jesus, but they might have been led to consider the religion of Jesus. They were answered not by the religion of Jesus but by a theology of orthodoxy. There was no shred of admission that the inquirers might possibly be right nor any hint of welcome for them on the simple basis of the imitation of Christ.

Why were these men rejected? They were seekers. Here appeared a genuine thirst for religion. Here hovered a dim but definite desire to find a home within the grand frame of Christian religion. These men stood at the door and knocked, but the door was closed upon them.

Mr. Niebuhr's paper symbolizes the arrogance of all orthodoxy. I do not object to anyone's holding his faiths. I hold some of them myself. I am objecting to their being proclaimed as final and definitive and thus perforce disbarring those who may not be able to accept them. Dr. Edwin McNeill Poteat has approvingly quoted Bishop C. E. Raven as saying: "Dogmatism! It was an evil day on which metaphysical subtleties became tests of Christian discipleship." [1]

Orthodoxy forgives moral errors; it does not forgive what it regards as intellectual errors. Its forgiveness extends to moral dishonesty but not to doubt, honest or dishonest, and not even to honest faith if it differs.

The "enlightened moderns" of the colloquy represent the greatest potential of a true Christianity. They feel the deficiencies of a merely secular culture, they wish to be religious. But they cannot accept the only alternative presented to them, a dogmatic religion. They are would-be or might-be Jesus

[1] *Andover Newton Bulletin* (October 1955), p. 22.

Christians, they will never become Calvinist of Thomist or even Niebuhrian Christians. Unknown companions of the enlightened moderns are all over the world, growing in numbers. They are a possible spiritual power for healing the divided mind of modern man and the divided politics of modern nations. They seek a *via media* between irreligion and orthodoxy, a way not of compromise but of positive and glorious freedom and faith. Their disbarment by dogmatism is a grievous loss to themselves, to the Christian church, and to society.

There is no denying this fact of disbarment or its source in dogmatism. We are still close to a dramatic instance of its operation against a whole Christian denomination, the refusal of the National Council of the Churches of Christ to admit the Universalist churches to membership. The Universalist churches sought admission, but the door was closed upon them. I understand, at least in some part, the probable costs to the National Council had it accepted the Universalists. It might have healed one division at the expense of causing another. This cost was readily discernible and would likely have been immediate. But the costs of the refusal, less easily discerned and more remote in effect, are very heavy, and they will still have to be paid.

Dogmatism not only bars people out, it casts out those who are already in. The proposal of the Presbyterians of Florida, already mentioned, to change a free church into a confessional church would automatically have cast out a considerable number of members, both old and young. Within the last few months an orthodox majority cast out a whole parish church from the local fellowship of churches: the Council of Protestant Churches of Bay City, Michigan, by adopting a new creedal requirement for membership, automatically cast out the First Congregational Church of that city. An old and staunch parish of the oldest religious body in America, save one, suffered this humiliation by their supposedly Christian brethren in a modern city. There can be no evading the scandal of this action.

This instance gives all the more significance to the general

freedom of the Congregational churches from dogmatism. Within that body are numerous members who hold traditional beliefs, but not as required for fellowship. The Constitution of the Congregational and Christian Churches of Illinois as issued in 1953 says: "We therefore base our union upon the acceptance of Christianity as primarily a way of life and not upon uniformity of theological opinion." In general, the other denominations which are congregational in polity are not dogmatic. Also, in general, the Methodist bodies are, in the matter of beliefs, free churches. All these churches, however, are responsible for the disbarments that are being practiced by Councils of Churches.

In the *Saturday Review* paper, Mr. Niebuhr speaks of the "ironic distortions which have overwhelmed the idealism, the humanism, and the utopianism of modern culture." It is debatable whether those distortions would ever have occurred except for the previous distortions of Christianity itself. Modern humanist idealism was not severed from popular religion by its own choice. It was automatically disbarred by dogmatism. In Europe, authoritarian religion had long marched side by side with autocratic government. It failed to stay the hands of disbelieving and ruthless men who felt no other mandate to righteousness. In Germany, the rise of the liberal spirit was too early quenched to become a prevalent power. The general church fell back into the refuge of a new orthodoxy and failed its nation in its critical hour. It was an already divided nation that became a prey to Nazism.

Perhaps the first to call attention to the great distortion was Frank Chamberlain Porter, in my view the greatest of Yale teachers. Professor Porter pointed out the old and true irony of Christian history. It is a strange irony, he said, that the very man who gave his life to free people from an authoritarian legalism should have been made the instrument of a new and more damaging intellectual autocracy. I quote his exact words: "It is strange that of Christ himself, whose spirit means freedom

from law and the pure inwardness of love, men should have made a new law to which the mind was required to yield as to a new outward authority; that while Christ set free, the doctrine of Christ should become a new bondage. It is strange that Paul, whose greatest concern was to free religion through Christ from all legalism, should have become himself the founder of a new Christian legalism of dogma. If there is an irony of fate surely this is an instance of it." [2]

Dogmatism is the same, whether in Palestine long ago or in America today. It disbars seekers.

> But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, . . . for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. (Matt. 23:13)

Dogmatism Threatens Social Order

That dogmatism is divisive is a commonplace of social observation. It has caused the numerous sectarian movements of Protestantism. It is not the sole cause. Today, as always since the times of the early Anabaptists, pietistic or experiential offshoots continue to occur. They have usually been protests against the formalities and fixtures of prevalent religion. Usually, also, they have begun at once to define their own positions by differing sets of doctrines. These formularies harden and thenceforth become the differentia with respect to all other branches of the faith. Sectarianism has some unfortunate consequences, but it is not an unmixed evil, or good. Some useful purposes are served by this prevailing system.

Nor are the sects within themselves a threat to social order. The divisions among them seem deeper than they are. Except for bodies of small numbers, they are all dogmatic. Having a common character and core of dogmatism, they have unity and up to a point constitute a powerful element of social order. But they together as a whole have become divided from the main

[2] *Yale Divinity Quarterly* (March 1911), p. 120.

streams of intellectual life, and thus a danger to the health and wholeness of society itself.

The division is a double one, it has two points: the content of dogmatism and the principle of dogmatism.

This is not the place to discuss the content of orthodox theology and the differences of belief between the orthodox creeds and the ideas common to the liberal mind, whether in or out of the churches. That has been and will continue to be the work of many scholars and thinkers, expressed in many writings. Those differences lie all along the line of beliefs concerning ultimate reality or God, nature and creation, human nature and salvation, history and society, the person of Christ, man and his destiny.

The numbers of those who differ from traditional doctrines, the definite skeptics and agnostics are far larger than commonly appears. They include, probably, most of modern scientists and scholars and a large number of teachers. Few philosophers of high rank are in accord with traditional beliefs. Intelligent business and professional men and well-read women who do not accept the orthodox dogmas are everywhere. All these constitute an intellectual mass of those who consciously and clearly reject the creeds of the churches. Only a few of them are assertive and speak out; most go quietly about their affairs and remain aloof from religion.

The numbers of those inside the churches who hold variant beliefs are also far larger than commonly appears. Some go to church because it is the "thing to do," to acquire and maintain an acceptance in the community. More creditably, others go for the values of human association. The church as a recognition and fellowship center fulfills one of its purest and most profound functions. Many support the church for the moral teaching and religious feeling it gives to their children. Many go for the good they receive in common worship, not because of but in spite of the dominant theology. Larger numbers go

because they are trying to be good Christians; they wish to follow the religion of Christ which they feel will shine through and prevail even though encumbered by unnecessary or erroneous dogmas. A few assist public religion because they believe it to be necessary to social order even though its content of teaching be outworn.

These and other classes, intermingled and overlapping, wish to practice and support religion; they do not consciously wish to promote the traditional dogmas. I do not deny that large numbers of church members deeply believe and devote themselves with full accord to the faiths of the creeds, even though that accord is mostly derived from the thoroughness of their conditioning. I do deny that the roll of churchmen is the roll of dogmatists. It is by no means certain which element in that roll is the larger: creed believers, or supporters with only half-hearted belief.

The situation of those many who support public religion for other reasons than definite belief in its theology is not a happy one. There is a troublesome cleft inside themselves. For the most part, they are but faintly aware of it, but it is there and it is deep. It prevents that pure integrity and wholeness of self which is the high task of religion to secure. There is a perpetual unease in the hearts of these people. It would be wonderful indeed if the God upheld in popular religion were one they could love and serve with all their heart and strength and mind.

The dogmatic churches still hold to the substance of the Reformation Age formularies. Some of the more drastic and forbidding doctrines have been dropped by revisions, but what remains are still stiff statements of the major range of orthodox beliefs. Some or all of these are held in doubt by a considerable percentage of church members, by a growing number of thoughtful citizens outside the churches, and by the majority of professional scientists and scholars.

The divergence from dogmatism is not only on account of the content of its beliefs but also from dogmatism as a principle.

The first meaning of dogmatism is that its faiths have the sanction of special or divine revelation, a view not in accord with the modern mind. Many dogmatists try to avoid this cleft by claiming that revelation is not a matter of specific ideas but the truth as embodied in a book or a person or the continuity of the church. But such truth can have no meaning except as conveyed by specific statements. The creeds are these statements. They cannot be accepted as having the authority of supernatural revelation.

Divergence respecting the sanction of special revelation is not on intellectual grounds only, but also on the ground of religion itself. The new orthodoxy, for all its intricate structure of speculation, offers no essential changes from the old orthodoxy, but rather builds upon some of the ancient bases as found in St. Augustine. It begins by considering that man at his worst is typical man. This man can be saved only by the grace of God as revealed only in Christ. This theory contrasts somewhat with the faith of Jesus, who began with man at his best and found the likeness of God in the forgiving father. In his religion no special revealer was needed to show the love of God, which any good man could manifest.

The second mark of dogmatism is its claim to be definitive and final. When one considers the awesome mysteries of life that surround us and work within us and the vast unknown which yet awaits exploration, it is a strange pride which presumes to offer a final summary of meanings and the only clue to their unraveling. If scientists have often come close to this kind of dogmatism, science today is more humble. It makes no pretensions to finality. It feels its way step by step. It knows that it has not arrived, but seeks only to follow the paths of truth wherever they may lead. The scientific mind cannot

adopt any statement or group of statements as a final definition of reality.

The third trait of the dogmatic principle is to make its beliefs a condition of religious fellowship. Fortunately, this is a condition which many religious bodies do not require. Societies of Friends, for instance, often include both orthodox and heterodox members. Neither party would dream of making its own beliefs the condition of membership or of leadership. While some of the large confessional churches require creedal adherence by their ordained officials only, that is none the less the underlying condition of fellowship. As already noted, the dogmatic requirement has become a condition of membership in the leading inter-church movements. A few local associational bodies make no such condition. I have myself had the good fortune to work in neighborhoods where the community religious association included both Christian and Jewish congregations, an arrangement which made for enlightenment and spiritual power.

If there be such a thing as the modern mind, it is a mind with strong convictions for itself, but opposed to the imposition of its beliefs upon others. It is a free mind and wishes freedom for all. The dogmatic policy of the churches requiring adherence to particular beliefs as a condition of religious fellowship is the effort to maintain the truth by legislation. This is against the ways of nature and the ways of God. Even Paul said that the law was but a schoolmaster to lead men to Christ. There will be no bridging the division of religion from the modern mind until the churches come out of the era of legalism into the free-mindedness of Christ.

Our citizens are thus divided not only as to the specific content of dogmatic theology but also at the point of dogmatism as a principle and policy. On the one side are those who hold their chief beliefs as sanctioned by special revelation, as definitive and final, and as necessary to religious fellowship. The

other side, rejecting all these, holds a view that revelation is continuing, that later and truer definitions of reality are yet to come, that the fellowships of men at the high level of religion should be open to all who humbly seek the light and try to serve the good.

The cleft between those who accept and those who reject the chief tenets of orthodox theology, and the deeper cleft between the mind of free inquiry and the mind of doctrine as revealed and required, are divisions so great as to constitute a breakdown of spiritual order and a threat to the political order of our nation. This damaging social effect of dogmatism has never been faced or even imagined by the leaders of orthodoxy. Orthodoxy has no adequate conception of social order and its dependence upon spiritual order. It has only a feeble notion of the relations of church and state. It has not scanned the far movements of tribes in history to see that all of them, large or small, were held together by the rites of their religion.

Political order anywhere and everywhere is dependent upon the prevalence of spiritual order. No great king or queen has long ruled by force alone, or even by law alone. The earliest rulers known to history are pictured as dependent upon the gods. They were themselves high priests, or they appointed priests to conduct the religious rituals of the people. In times of peace or times of war, they utilized the festivals of religion to stir the fervor or assure the obedience of the tribesmen. Not even the modern tyrants of the Fascist and Nazi and Comminтern regimes dared to attempt rule by force alone. They devised ideologies and rituals for the inculcation of their doctrines.

Great nations in history decayed with the decay of their religions. The loss of spiritual order was followed by the decline of political order. Constantine became a supporter of a new spiritual order only when he realized the breakdown of order under the old gods. And when the new Christianity was authorized, he could not brook any major division within that order, and opposed the Arians. It is not without strong reasons that

many rulers oppose Protestant missions, which disturb the spiritual order upon which they depend. I well recall the plight of the Hungarian religious minorities assigned to Roumania by the settlement of World War I. Given her premises, the beautiful queen was right in condoning the hardships put upon these minorities. They were a threat to political order because they were a disturbance of the spiritual order maintained by the official Eastern Orthodox church.

All government depends upon a popular ideology. The health of the social order requires an order of spirit prevalent among the people. A free nation can tolerate and survive considerable minor variations; it cannot long survive major clefts in the spiritual life that sustains it.

Such major divisiveness is our present condition and as such, threatens our social order. Our political order is based upon the supposition and the principle of the free mind, our academic order is based upon the principle of the free mind; the most of our ecclesiastical system is based upon the submission of the mind to the authority of fixed beliefs. This cleft is wide and deep. These principles are mutually exclusive. They are not in accord but in discord. On the one side is creedal authoritarianism, both Catholic and Protestant; on the other is religious and political freedom. These are two modes of spiritual order, not the unity of spiritual order necessary to the unity and health of any nation.

This fact is well recognized by the Roman church, which understands the necessary harmony of spiritual and political order and proposes to uphold a changed political order by the prevalence of its own authoritarian spiritual order. The Roman Catholic church has a clear conception of the relations of church and state. It proposes to master the state.

This fact is well recognized and avowedly accepted by certain ultra-conservative bodies. These churches have abandoned society to corruption and destruction; only the true church is the remnant to be saved. This position is logically in

accord with the faiths of their believers. These bodies have a clear conception of the relations of church and state. They propose to abandon the state.

This fact is not recognized by the leaders of the large confessional churches. They do not see that the logic of their position implies the same abandonment of society that is openly accepted by the escatological bodies. Some of them speak well concerning important items of the social gospel, but they have no proposal for preserving society itself.

This abandonment of society is implied in the recent establishment of parochial schools by Lutheran bodies. The Catholic system of separate schools carries no such implication, for it is an avowed object of the Roman church not to abandon the state but to capture it. The separation of sectarian schools by Protestant bodies constitutes a complete withdrawal from responsibility for the spiritual order of the nation.

Ominous and difficult questions are thus placed before the dogmatic churches. What is their conception of the duty of the church towards the state? Do they truly believe that freedom of government can be sustained by authoritarian religion? Do they expect to persuade the academic mind to abandon its freedom and accept their authority? Do they have any valid proposal for the cohesion of society? Do they accept or reject responsibility for political order? I do not find that these questions are even asked by orthodox or neo-orthodox theologians, much less answered.

They write of the philosophy of history and have not discerned the judgments of that Total Life that is at once the life of God and of history upon all authoritarian powers, political and ecclesiastical. They write of the failure of liberal religion to master the industrial mind of our time. Have they forgotten that when the liberal voices of Washington Gladden and Josiah Strong and Walter Rauschenbush and Francis Peabody were urging industrial reforms, they, the dominant orthodox leaders, were promoting a counter-reformation of traditional evange-

lism? Have they forgotten the generations of students in the huge movements of that time kept almost completely in the dark both as to liberal theology and liberal morals? They speak of ironies. Is it not an irony that they deride secular idealism when the very freedom of mind which upholds our nation is now sustained not by religion but by the documents and instruments of our secular government and the practices of our secular universities?

Dogmatism is a threat to social and political order because it divides the order of its beliefs from the order of the free mind and prevents the formation and prevalence of that common spiritual order which is necessary to social and political order.

Dogmatism Stifles Growth

Growth is life and life is growth. The end of growth is the beginning of death. All things move and change and are renewed. Even the decay and death of the old passes into fertility for the new. There is no standing still. Fixity of belief is against nature herself, for nature is ever moving on. From day to day there is everywhere death and everywhere newness of life. Fixity of belief is equally against the life of the spirit.

> Put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. (Col. 3:10)
>
> Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. (Eph. 4:23)
>
> Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1 Cor. 13:12)

The Bible abounds in symbols of growth and images of hope for the betterment of life.

> And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. (Ps. 1:3)
>
> And their soul shall be as a watered garden. (Jer. 31:12)
>
> The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. (Is. 35:1)

> The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree. (Matt. 13:31, 32)
>
> The earth beareth fruit of herself. (Mk. 4:28)

Growth is natural and seems effortless. Yet growth of the spirit is difficult. Growth in knowledge is comparatively easy. Anyone may keep learning more and more about almost anything and everything. The general growth in knowledge moves by leaps and bounds. Growth in grace is not so easy. To be more patient, to be more sympathetic, to be more brave and kind and generous, this is harder. Nor is growth in apprehension easy. The effort to learn what is best is much neglected. The best is in these days open for the enjoyment of more and more, but not appropriated by all. Growth in wisdom and understanding is perhaps most difficult of all. While knowledge increases rapidly, understanding of its meanings is slow. Some of the deepest penetrations of mind and spirit were made long ago. The mysteries of ultimate meaning are still far from solution. Only by a very little at a time do we push back their shadows.

This is a strong justification for caution in the change of beliefs concerning things ultimate. The faiths we hold about the most important matters cannot wisely be altered with every wind of doctrine that blows through the fashions and foibles of decades and generations. It is difficult to transcend some of the old statements of highest value. They seem to stand fast forever.

Yet knowledge increases and wisdom grows, and these require changes in faith and belief. Consider, for instance, the conception and value of what is called "miracle." Much of the old system of beliefs still rests upon the sanction of miracle in the sense of the special intervention of God. But that sanction is now challenged both by knowledge and by understanding. The idea of the universality of natural law is so well established as to be regarded as knowledge. The modern mind rejects the

idea of any break in the operations of natural law. So also does the modern understanding. Any alleged special providences of God through the interruption of natural order are now regarded as special favors incompatible with a nobler conception of God. Any breakage of natural law, also, would destroy that dependence upon the laws of nature by which farmers and chemists perform their labors of provision and welfare. Any interruption of natural law, moreover, would destroy for modern man one of his most secure foundations of faith in God. Both knowledge and wisdom demand a change from the sanction of miracle. This one consideration alone is ample cause for rejecting the ancient creeds as definitive and final. The growth of man in knowledge and wisdom has been achieved not by the aid of the old dogmas but in spite of them.

Dogmatism stifles growth. It reverses the true path of knowledge and understanding. It claims that while we do not yet know many facts about nature and man that may later be discovered, we do know a final word about the ultimate mysteries. The opposite is the truth. We do know a vast amount about nature and even the mind of man; we have not solved the mystery of ultimate being. The dogmatist will aver that the items of his credo are not claimed as knowledge but as faiths. But if, then, they are admittedly only speculative, is it not an unwarranted assumption to claim for them the authority of revelation and finality of definition, is it not unwarranted arrogance to make them conditions of fellowship?

Dogmatism cuts the nerve of curiosity. One of the greatest glories of human nature is the drive of curiosity, the zest for discovery, the thirst to know what lies beyond the mountain and over the sea and within the atom. The frontiers of knowledge are no longer geographical; they are astronomical, chemical, psychological, and spiritual. They still beckon the adventurer. But the very love of venture is quenched among those who claim to know the final truths.

To hold that the most important truths are already re-

vealed is a logical and psychological block in the pathway of learning and discovery. The very atmosphere and climate of the typical dogmatic church is one of complacency and lethargy of mind. There is perpetual reiteration, there is little expectation of more light. There is little challenge to fresh intellectual effort or spiritual exploration. The music goes round and round. There is conformity and mediocrity, there is little independence and originality.

The mind of science, meanwhile, has moved into new regions of discovery and power, regions that carry at once the promise of unprecedented growth for all the life of man and the threat of annihilation. There is no comparable stir of imagination among religious leaders to discover the new moral mandates that lie all along the lines of the new conceptions of process and order throughout nature. It is these mandates that will confirm the inner truths of Christian ethics and add to these the new persuasions and compulsions of inescapable reality.

The growth of knowledge is here, it is vast, it is promising, it is ominous. It must either bless or curse all our hopes. It calls upon men of religion to compose those structures of ideas and ideals that will grip the modern mind and draw the glad allegiance of high and low in many lands. The time is not bye and bye, it is now. The materials are at hand, in the riches of scientific knowledge, esthetic apprehension, moral advances, and religious wisdom. They can never be given order or cogency by the dogmatic mind; they can be appropriated by the free religious mind for new formularies of incomparable power and hope.

The high spirit of superior men will not sink into the complacency of dogmatism. It is the spirit of endless quest, the spirit of faith, that never hardens into fixities of belief. It is the spirit of life that grows on and on, forever and ever.

In Professor Whitehead's penetrating book *Symbolism,*

the very last sentence is a sharp warning against the stifling effect of unchanging beliefs: "Those societies which cannot combine reverence to their symbols with freedom of revision, must ultimately decay either from anarchy, or from the slow atrophy of a life stifled by shadows." [3]

If the Bible contains many words that seem to be a warrant of finality, it contains also decisive pointers to the way beyond. Jeremiah, despite the long authorities of the law, pointed to a way beyond and transcending the law:

> After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. (Jer. 31:33)

Similar prophecies are attributed to Jesus:

> Greater works than these shall he do. (John 14:12)

> And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)

The damages of dogmatism are many and great: it fosters obscurantism; it encourages duplicity; it confounds education; it promotes aggression; it disbars seekers; it threatens social order; it stifles growth. These constitute an indictment which cannot be evaded.

These evils are tragic as repeating ancient patterns of religious authoritarianism which long ago had disastrous effects. These evils are tragic as placing mere judgments of the mind above the immediate experience of communion with God; and doubly tragic as regarding judgments of the past above the living light of the present. The dogmatic mind is rejected not only as being insufficiently scientific but as being insufficiently religious. Its faith in God is feeble. Its mystic experience is feeble. It does not truly believe in the inner light for today or divine illuminations for tomorrow. One seems to hear in the murmurs of the east wind an echo of a bitter plaint and a

[3] Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1927), p. 88.

bitter accusation: "Ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition."

These evils are tragic as being unnecessary, because there is an alternative and better way. The dangers and damages of dogmatism can be done away with by the clear acceptance of the primacy of worship, the positive and ever renewed vitality of religion as the practice of communion with the Final Powers.

VIII. EVANGELICAL—CATHOLIC—ECUMENICAL

These are three great words, derived from the Greek: *evangelical,* carrying news so good that it must be borne to all men everywhere; *catholic,* concerning the whole, comprehensive in outlook and sympathy; *ecumenical,* covering all the habitable globe. Each of these intimates an aim of religious universality. All Christian churches claim to exemplify one or more of these qualities; today, none of the large church bodies can qualify for any of them.

Evangelical

The evangelical believes that he possesses the gospel, a gospel necessary to salvation, without which men are lost. He is concerned for the lost. He is the bearer of salvation. He becomes an apostle and missioner. He is a messenger bringing glad tidings.

Christianity has always been a gospel religion. The names of its great apostles and missionaries shine bright upon the pages of its story, from St. Paul to David Livingstone, from St. Augustine of Britain to Adoniram Judson, from St. Francis Xavier to Robert Hume. The account of the Christian evangel is a story of saintliness and sacrifice, of men and women, gifted and heroic, who have moved upon all the face of the earth and changed the course of peoples and of nations. No one can question the purity of spirit and motive behind the long movement of the Christian evangel. If today there are many who question the truth of its word and the wisdom of its work, no one can prove that it had better never been.

The evangelical churches exist to proclaim the gospel, to

carry the word of salvation to men both near and far. Within their fellowships, countless men and women of many lands have achieved an admirable righteousness of life and peace of spirit. Evangelical religion has transmitted to untold numbers some true portion of the spirit of Christ and wrought in their lives a noble manifestation of love to God and fellow-men.

Even in its more crude forms, the word of the evangel has sometimes come close to an all sufficient gospel. In my own memory of evangelistic meetings long ago, lingers a phrase that seems to have been the chief burden of the preacher's appeal, the urgent call to "get right with God." Few phrases could be more laden with a near fullness of religious life. It assumes the competence of the individual to choose. It defines the religious life in terms of right relations with the final powers. And there are numerous evangelical churches which have enlarged their message to a nearly complete or catholic quality. They have expanded the original gospel of salvation by the death of Christ, with its other-worldly emphasis, to embrace the major values of cultural life and the major obligations of the Christian towards his society.

But evangelical religion does not in general possess or proclaim a gospel sufficient for the salvation of modern man or modern society. The typical evangelical church does not even have the ideal of being also at the same time a comprehending or catholic church. Although it may recite the Apostle's Creed, which includes a belief in the "holy catholic church," it does not really believe that item of the creed. In the light of complete religion, its gospel is far from catholic; it is thin and meagre and partial. That meagreness has not yet been overcome throughout the life of prosperous American denominations. Though they have built beautiful buildings and developed more dignity of worship, their message is still in the main the evangel of a limited salvation.

This limitation is not the fault of any local parish or min-

ister; it is inherent in the essence of the evangelical idea as hitherto held. So long as evangelical is identified with a supernatural sanction or person or revelation, it cannot truly become either catholic or ecumenical. It has no adequate word for those who cannot accept its major premise. It offers no standing room for the increasing hosts of those who seek a religion of more inclusive or catholic scope. It cannot properly qualify for the universal task it claims for its own.

Curiously enough, the fault of meagreness and partiality applies, though in lesser degree, to a religion of a quite opposite intellectual point of view. Here too is displayed the limitation inherent in the evangelical conception. So-called Humanist churches, that carry the message of their specific beliefs as primary, also suffer a lack of that fullness of life which alone is sufficient for salvation. They are a type of the evangelical idea which has not yet become catholic. These churches are performing a function necessary to saving religion for the modern world. They are affording a place within the frame of religion for many who are disbarred by almost everyone else. Yet also, they share the fault inherent in the evangelical idea as the sole religious principle.

The evangelical believes that his message is all-sufficient and that it must be carried to all men. For the reasons already suggested, few living churches which profess the evangelical idea do in fact qualify for it. They do not offer a salvation worthy to fulfill the claim of universality which the spirit of evangelism requires.

Any practice of religion as based upon the complete life of the religious absolutes must of necessity nullify the evangelical idea as based upon supernatural revelation or specific dogmas. But that would not be the end of evangelism. If there should come to be a kind of neo-catholic religion of the complete life, its proclamation would be the good news or the glad evangel of full salvation.

Catholic

In the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella in the city of Florence is a large medieval frescoe called the "Triumph of Saint Thomas." At the base of the composition and thus intimating its basic idea, is a frieze of figures representing the Sciences, the supposed historic practitioners of Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectics, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, Music, and Philosophy. This frieze symbolizes, also, other parts of the Speculum Majus of St. Vincent de Beauvais, which outlines the categories embraced in the catholic idea of that time. The four major divisions are the Mirror of Nature, the Mirror of History, the Mirror of Science, and the Mirror of Morals. The Speculum became the guide for the vast and varied iconography of the medieval churches.

The frescoe in Florence brings sharply to mind the ideal and effort of the catholic conception, that of an all-embracing or complete religion. The fact that the Speculum omitted many aspects of life which we should now include in an effort of total survey in no way alters its character of completeness as then understood. Nor does another more important fact alter the underlying and valid character of the catholic idea. This is the distinction made by Thomas Aquinas between truth by knowledge or reason and truth by revelation. That distinction seemed to be the only solution for including in one total catholic system what appeared otherwise to be two irreconcilable foundations. St. Thomas saw that both must somehow be included in a catholic religion. The pressures from the side of knowledge and reason were not sufficient for him to reject the values on the side of revelation. Nor were the faiths of revelation so all-sufficient as to displace the solid foundation of the sciences, as witness the fresco in Santa Maria Novella. That distinction, moreover, and that reconciliation were made in the mind of Thomas himself, by the authority of his own free-mindedness.

The unity he sought for his time, we must seek for our own time. We must differ from him as to the mode of reconciliation. We must be united with him in the effort of catholic universality.

The judgments of our time require a different mode of unity than the medieval because of changes on both sides of the antimony. The revelation side has been weakened not only intellectually but morally and religiously. Religiously, the conception of revelation as limited to one people or one historic line in the midst of thousands of other peoples is now inconceivable, as also the idea of revelation as a closed book in view of millions of years of human life yet to come. Morally, the supposed special choice of God whereof comparatively only a few are the beneficiaries is a kind of special favor now repugnant even to the secular moral sense. On the side of knowledge and reason, the investigations of scholarship and science now include not only so-called material facts but every phenomenon of life, intuitional and psychical, moral and esthetic, social, economic, political, and all else. The structure of true catholic religion cannot possibly dispense with the results of human knowledge and reason. This becomes the more clear as faiths in divinity which the modern mind may harbor and cherish conceive the operations of the final powers as moving not outside but within the mind and spirit of man.

There is no insoluble antimony of reason and revelation. Revelation discerns the power of God in the labors of man's mind. Reason in its final flights lifts the logical towards the highest apprehensions and faiths of the spirit. Yet neither Catholic nor Protestant theology has achieved a mode of unity that differs from the medieval solution by a measure commensurate with the changed and differing factors. The Catholic churches have not accepted these changes. Slowly they become more and more one-sided. They have followed the revelation side of St. Thomas while losing his strong foundation of knowledge and reason.

The specific Catholic churches of today thus fall short, as do the evangelical, of the very universality they claim. They do not now even aspire to that catholicity which was the near achievement of St. Thomas' church. The Thomist system embraced the whole panoply of the spiritual life and labor of man. Neither Catholic nor Protestant bodies now afford such a universality. They cannot offer to modern man a truly catholic religion because they do not now harmonize the faiths held by revelation with the solid and impregnable foundations of all human life in those disciplines that might be called the modern Speculum. The churches which have retained the specific results of Aquinas have rejected his spirit and aim. It should be just the contrary. They should reject some of his specific doctrines but pursue his grand objective. The church of tomorrow will freshly seek and manifest the complete life. It will be not less but more catholic.

The new catholic spirit and aim will be that universality which embraces all the energies and efforts of the three religious absolutes of truth and goodness and beauty in their full and free and combined operation. This is not syncretism, it is not a mechanical structure; it is organic, it is catholic religion.

Ecumenical

The ecumenical ideal is that of a world-wide and all-embracing harmony or unity in religion. As a specific movement, it has sought for deeper understanding and accord among the various bodies of Christendom. In the face of many real obstacles and stubborn differences, it has persistently labored to improve inter-church relations. It has accomplished some imposing manifestations of religious fellowship and given moving utterance to timely humanitarian concerns.

Thus far, however, the ecumenical movement has not attempted to bridge the deeper gaps that divide the spiritual life of mankind. Apparently it has no vision or program for

harmony with the world of other religions nor the world of achievements by the secular mind. Today we live in one world of communication and commerce, one world of political aspiration, and one world of ideological conflict. A movement which confines itself to a segment of the moral and spiritual ideals of living men can scarcely be regarded as ecumenical in the full and original sense of covering the habitable globe.

The movement has not noticed that there are several other large-scale religions on the earth besides Christianity. The only attitude of the Christian bodies in general towards the rest of the earth and its religions is the hope of conquest for Christianity. There is little analysis of their own fitness for such a task; there is little analysis of the values of other faiths which they seek to displace.

The intelligence of the Orient has for the most part rejected the Christianity that has been presented. Many Oriental leaders who have a deep reverence for Jesus and the spirit of Christ do not accept the dogmatic religion of the majority of Christian missions. The Protestant churches, meanwhile, have paid all too little attention to the wise advisories of their own commission under Professor Hocking published a few years ago.

Typical Protestant studies of other religions are more interested in finding points of weakness than in the discovery of features to be emulated or utilized as bridges of ecumenical harmony. They seem not to consider that other religions may contribute something to Christianity. Christian followers might learn much from the monotheism of Judaism and Islam, from Buddhist universality and Taoist mysticism and Hindu reverence for life. I have the authority of Dr. Lucius Chapin Porter, many years a distinguished missionary of the American Board and Dean of Yenching University, for a remarkable inscription at a Buddhist monastery in Suchuan, supposedly the words of a saintly Boddisatva: "Until hell has been emptied, I will not accept Buddhahood." Surely this is a more lofty hope than the old Christian doctrine of eternal punishment. The "human-

heartedness" of Confucius belongs not to an alien region but in one world of the spirit with Paul's "charity." Every Christian church may well examine more fully the teachings of other religions, not only to seek parallels with its own tenets but to bring to light the many words of wisdom and spiritual inspiration they contain. World ecumenicity waits upon far more extensive knowledge and appreciation of the profound values in other religions.

The ecumenical ideal is not the union of Christian churches or uniformity among them; it is harmony and unity of spirit. It does not propose to abolish differences of belief or usage. By encouraging the disciplines of worship rather than belief as central in religion, it could open the way of harmony among diversities and solve the dilemma of unity and variety. The movement at this time could not easily propose gatherings representative of different religions. But it might seriously consider sending out a call for another Parliament of Religions to be held on the centennial of the gathering in 1893. At all times it could encourage respect for other faiths and increasing knowledge of their values.

If the coverage of the ecumenical spirit and movement is to be universal and world-wide in the geographical sense, it must be universal also in the categorical sense. Its coverage must be inclusive of the spiritual life of man in his localities as well as in his diffusions. Not much longer can there be health in the body politic if the division between sacred and secular is so much emphasized and tolerated as it is today. While the great religious bodies are preoccupied with healing the lesser divisions among themselves, they are blind to the major cleft between themselves and secular spirituality.

Recent writings of theologians have belabored the shortcomings of the secular world, as though it were a responsible creature or entity. There is no such creature. There are secular institutions, movements, and circles of life, and they are mostly doing their own job well, in science, technology, industry, edu-

cation, literature, and the arts. It is not the function of these disciplines to organize moral principles and make them prevalent. That is the business of religion. If religion has not succeeded in permeating the various areas of life with its own spirit and power, it has only itself to blame. For unlike secularity, it is an embodied and responsible entity having the church as its arm and instrument.

Secularity is segmented. It comprises many circles of life and effort, only some of which have specific organized instruments. It is headless, it has no wholeness, either of mind or body. Only religion can have wholeness, for completeness of life is religion. Only religion can organize the values of all areas of life into such a total spiritual order as to afford integrity for the individual and health to society. But this is just what religion fails to do. Its ecumenical spirit has no vision of total spiritual harmony for man in his localities.

The secular segments or circles of life, meanwhile, as always in history, are constantly producing values, both material and spiritual. The material providence of industry is at an all-time high. This is admirable, this should be noted by the church with thanksgiving and praise. One of the privileges of religion is to celebrate the virtues of men in their daily toil and thus impart to everyone a social conception of his labor. Industry, moreover, is developing not only material but moral advances. If it is the secular area where rapacity and ruthless competition are all too common, it is also in these days the center of intelligent movements towards democracy. The dignity of man in his labor is more and more being recognized and implemented. In similar manner, every other center and circle of secular activity, in science and philosophy and technology, in letters and arts, in sports and politics, is constantly developing ideas and values and spiritual goods.

If the church is to be truly ecumenical, it cannot place itself over against the secular; it must rather recognize and compose all the splendid achievements of common life into the

grand design which is religion. Only religion can create harmony for man. If religion fails to do it, man is left a divided or multiple self and cannot be fully human. The action which celebrates and harmonizes all the values of life is the action of worship, which must ever be, as it has ever been, central in religion.

The ecumenical aim of religious harmony in the habitable globe must cover the whole spiritual life of man in his localities and in his diffusions. These cannot be separated.

Over all the earth, these are days of ominous forebodings and anxieties. But they are days, also, of splendid new dreams and active movements for freedom. In all the lands of the East are strong and gallant men who seek to win for their nations the freedom and hope we have won for ours. They fight against heavy odds: ignorance and poverty, feudal powers, time serving and private ambitions among their own people, and from without, the false doctrines and infiltrations of Communism.

New nations are trying to find themselves and to be themselves. In this desperate struggle, they are not aided by a Western religion that pours indiscriminate contempt upon their ancient faiths and culture. They are trying to throw off all forms of tyranny and autocracy, whether their own or imposed by colonial powers. They cannot be aided by a Christianity which comes to them in authoritarian forms. In the fateful clash of ideologies, they must find clean and pure sanctions for freedom and new order. Authoritarian religion cannot supply that necessity. It can only hinder and confuse. This has become so obvious and troublesome in India that the government itself has been obliged to take measures of protection against an infiltration dangerous to its huge and difficult task of unity.

In the face of this crisis and this opportunity, the churches of the ecumenical movement have forgotten their own aim of harmony and clung to the old and tragic policy of imposition.

They are attempting to operate a colonial system of spiritual overlordship far more damaging to human rights and freedoms than that of the old governmental forms. That it is intermixed with many valuable humanitarian aids does not condone the underlying authoritarianism.

The intelligence of the East is becoming more keen in its judgments. It needs the West and copies the West, but no longer indiscriminately. It is aware of science, it is aware of dogmatic religion, it is aware of the cleft between them; it must have science, it does not want dogmatic religion. It is becoming acute and wise, and from a distance sees us better than we see ourselves. It knows that free government cannot be built upon authoritarian ideology. It sees what we ourselves have yet to discern, that the permanent health of a free nation requires the prevalence of a free religion.

Western religion in its homelands has a powerful effect upon the East, with or without missionary movements. The West cannot give ideological aid to the East when its own spirit is divided between freedom of mind and authority of faith. More than military aid or economic aid, the East needs foundation ideas and faiths. This world crisis and opportunity, the ecumenical movement has ignored. While it has been bickering about dogmas, the very principle of dogmatism has failed and is failing over all the earth. In the face of the most titanic struggle of all time, the West is impotent. It does not have within itself the clear unity of mind and faith that is the desperate need of the East.

An ecumenical movement which has not yet harmonized the spiritual life of man in his localities is not fitted for the prime world task of today—a deeper harmony of the mind of man in his diffusions. Now is the time, as never before, for a truly ecumenical task, not an aim at uniformity or imposition, but an effort of understanding and sympathy, an exchange of values, a welding of worships in the fullness of freedom.

The religion of tomorrow will be catholic, as embracing and celebrating the whole range of human concerns and values; it will be ecumenical, as covering the entire spiritual life of man in his localities and in his diffusions over the habitable globe; it will be evangelical, as a glad outgoing of brotherly good will and the realized fellowships of freedom.

IX. THE NEW RELIGIOUS ATOM

If, in the near future, we suffer the dread misfortune of war, then the new atomic power is likely to destroy civilized life as we know it. If such a disaster is averted for even a few years, the new atomic power will produce undreamed-of economic changes and open new paths of international, inter-racial, and inter-cultural accord.

All over the earth, the throbbing energies of human activity are geared to new powers and processes, pressing forward to still greater masteries of the material world. Where in the religious world are comparable achievements and efforts? Is religion quickening its imagination to conceive more fully its own nature and role in the coming atomic age? Is it even aware that there may be a new religious atom that differs from the old religious atom as the new physical atom differs from the old?

Up to the present, many religions and sects of religions have been centered in a group of beliefs. The ultimate unit, the atom of the faith, is a creed. The old physical atom as the ultimate unit of matter was a collection of particles or a pattern of inert substances. So also the old religious atom, as the ultimate unit of faith, is a collection of specific ideas or a pattern of fixed beliefs.

Not so the new atom. It is now seen that the atom as the ultimate unit of matter is not a collection of inert particles but a group of movements, a pattern of energies. So the new religious atom as the ultimate unit of faith is not a collection of unchanging and fixed beliefs but a group of spiritual energies and a pattern of religious actions.

The new physical atom is an organization of energized and energizing elements—protons, neutrons, and electrons. So is the

new religious atom. The elements of the true religious atom are the spirit of truth, the spirit of goodness, and the spirit of beauty. These are spiritual energies. They are organized in and by a pattern of religious actions, which comprise worship, to form the new religious atom.

Each of these energies is a powerful religious force. The spirit of truth is the active love of truth wherever it may lead. It is never fixed unchangeably upon any specific idea or belief. It is the live zeal for knowledge and understanding. However strong its convictions at any one time, it is always the perpetual search for more truth. The spirit of goodness is not a final allegiance to any particular code of morals or any completed definition of specific ideals. It is the inner love of right, a ceaseless devotion to the doing of good. The spirit of beauty is more than the apprehension of the beautiful world around us. It is also the urge to make beauty, to create order and structures of order, the unending reaching forth towards the beauty of holiness.

None of these energies can stand alone. Each requires the others. What organizes them and binds them together is a pattern of related actions which are the activities of worship. By the praise of all that is glorious and good, by clear humility and quiet waiting, by all-embracing remembrances and concerns, by eager efforts for larger understanding and faith, by pure dedications of heart and hand, by fellowships that are open and unlimited, which are all the religious actions of worship, these energies are mingled and fashioned into that supreme experience of communion with the Most High that is at once our noblest task and most sublime joy.

The ultimate unit of living religion is thus not the old atomic pattern of received and fixed beliefs forming a creed; it is the new atomic pattern of religious energies and actions forming a discipline of worship.

This does not mean that religion does not require beliefs. On the contrary, one of the central efforts of worship is to

achieve strong faiths and convictions. It does not mean that the new religious atom rejects all old beliefs. It may retain an old belief or a new belief for generations, but never as a finality, and always with a complete willingness to change that belief according to new illuminations. The same is true for ethics and for esthetics.

Ideas change, beliefs have changed and are changing: the spirit of truth is changeless. Morals differ among differing religions: all true religions require the love of righteousness and the spirit of goodness. Tastes and styles in the arts are ephemeral: the love of beauty, the demand to bring more and more of life under the sway of order, continues through all times. Cosmogonies and theologies fade and die: it is God who is the Eternal.

It is for precisely this reason that the new religious atom may open new paths to ecumenical harmony. The old atom of static beliefs has divided and will divide. The true common denominator of all religions is not intellectual but religious, not the old atomic pattern of religious beliefs that is a *creed* but the new atomic pattern of religious actions that is *worship*. The new religious atom that is a discipline of worship can bring about a deep religious unity while affording many varieties of intellectual and moral diversity.

The old religious atom is untenable for religion, as the old physical atom is untenable for science. It cannot sustain either church or state in the coming atomic age. There is a new religious atom as there is a new physical atom. Its appropriation and use could add as much to the spiritual growth of man as the new physical atomic power may add to his material welfare.

Philosophy is the articulation and completion of mysticism, but mysticism in turn is needed in order to complete by correction and supplementation the work of philosophy. . . . If it is the destiny of mysticism to lose its life in philosophy, it is the destiny of philosophy to recover its hold upon its object by renewal of the mystic vision. . . . Mysticism is not only the completion of philosophy; it is its presupposition; it lies at the beginning of philosophy as it lies also at the end.

CHARLES A. BENNETT, *A Philosophical Study of Mysticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1923), p. 110.

X. MYSTICAL CLARITY AND MYSTIC FORCE

It is in these days important to notice a much ignored truth about mysticism. The mystic way is often thought to be a turning inward or a turning upward but not a turning outward. True mysticism is not only passive, it is also an active outgoing power.

The mystic path is, to be sure, a withdrawal from ordinary practical affairs. It may be a deliberate attempt at retreat and meditation, attendance at a church service or a walk by the shore. It may just happen, in a conversation with a friend or a sudden coming upon a wide mountain view. Some such experience of withdrawal from ordinary matters is quite common in the sense that almost everyone has it. In its more conscious intentions, it is still a fairly common experience which innumerable people seek in private prayer or public worship. Its more developed forms are attempted by very few, its higher reaches extremely rare. In any case, the mystic way is not withdrawal only, it is also return. If it is in itself an extraordinary action, it is carried over into ordinary affairs as renewed moral force and new clarity of mind. This practical return is essential to true mysticism.

We should pause to admit what seems a contrary fact, the practice of withdrawal without return. The typical "holy man" of Eastern religions is one who has abandoned not only ordinary goods but ordinary duties. He seems to have declined all responsibility for industry or politics and even for charity. His justification is the example of his abstinence. His hope is that his own extremity of self-denial will induce in others the practice of at least a moderate self-restraint, a lessened desire for material and a greater valuation of spiritual goods.

Much of historic mysticism seems to have had some taint of irresponsibility, of living under the peace and protection of government without performing its share of the labors required for the maintenance of social order. On the other side has been the peace and order of conventual life in the midst of social and political disorders. On the other side, also, have been the extensive labors of religious priests and nuns in the preaching, teaching, and charitable orders. One cannot properly say that professional mysticism as a whole has been withdrawal without return.

Is there, then any validity to the mystic's claim of intellectual clarity and moral force? The more moot question is the intellectual one. The mystic has announced revelations. He claims to have sought and received illumination.

If by revelation we mean some new word or idea imparted directly by God, then the modern mind will reject the claim. If we mean that men may seek and find a fresh clarity of mind and a true enlightenment of life by the processes of the mystic way, then should modern man not only admit the claim but practice the discipline. Does the mystic discover new facts or conceive new ideas? The religious seeker finds, to be sure, only what was there all the time, but he finds a fresh awareness and a new comprehension of the factors of his world. He may return from his mystic retreat as a leading zealot for his own tradition, or possibly with a new selection of the best in his tradition, but rarely as a convert to some other faith. The Moslem mystic does not return from his devotions with his head full of Christian doctrines. Few medieval mystics made any important contributions to theology. But many achieved such a powerful sense of the importance of the faiths they had that they lived and practiced what ordinary men only professed. In general pre-Copernican mystics continued in the pre-Copernican mind.

None of us can get very far beyond the knowledge and ideas of his own time and place. But any of us may seek and

perhaps achieve some fuller understanding of the facts and meanings of life about us and within. An ordinary airplane flight, for instance, may afford an entirely new comprehension of the terrain observed. This is the kind of illumination which the mystic seeks and finds. There is no knowledge of anything without the close-up ordinary view, there is little understanding without the higher extra-ordinary view. Some illumination or enlarged comprehension is one of the objectives of all private prayer and public worship. It is a valid desire and a valid achievement. Such an experience many people have in some degree or other. It may not take the worshipper very far outside the frame of his ordinary opinions, but often yields a stronger faith and a steadier devotion.

The experience of the greatest mystics is another story. They are the ones whose preparations and efforts of imagination have been so disciplined and intense as to break the shell of previous conceptions and lead the whole world to broader outlooks and truer faiths. Such are the prophets who have come out of the deserts to denounce prevailing moralities and point the way to nobler ethics. Such are the founders of religions who have set for whole nations of men standards of faith and conduct better than they had before.

Was the message of these men the voice of reason or the word of revelation? It would seem that in the past those who have changed the morals of nations and enlarged faiths to such a degree as to leave millions of followers have been more mystical than reasonable. But they were surely men of superior minds who brought to their religious experience an amplitude of reason and long reflection. In the present, it would seem that intellectual advances are more largely the work of scientists and philosophers. But the highest conceptions are still born of those moments when the labors of the mind have mounted to a supreme effort to consider all the factors. There is a point where the slow processes of reason must pass into the swift insights and acceptances that have the character of mystical

illumination. There is no true dilemma of reason and revelation. The greatest mystics have been good reasoners, the best thinkers have come close to the heights of the mystic way.

If there is, then, a valid mystical clarity, why is there so little evidence of it in ordinary religion? Why is it that so many men go into the house of God to pray and ever come out by the same door wherein they went?

The first answer is the weakness of a religion based more upon beliefs than upon communion with God. All creedal religion is unfavorable to mysticism, and therefore to any valid illumination. Most of Protestantism takes its beliefs seriously; excepting the Quakers, it does not take its worship seriously. It does not really believe in revelation. It seems to pray, "Lord give us light—but not so much as to outmode the lamps we have." There is little illumination because there is no thoroughgoing desire for illumination.

The other answer lies in faulty preparation. The austerities practiced by the great mystics were extremes of hardship. Severe self-denials were undertaken to assure purity of motive. Humility and moral repentance were necessary preparations for prayer. The necessity for mental humility is less frequently recognized today. The arrogance of fixed beliefs can hardly expect any significant enlightenment. The farther mystic paths are not open until the humble worshipper has passed a long way upon the *via purificativa.* The way of purgation applies to the mind as well as to the heart and hand. The high practice of prayer considers not only what conduct needs to be changed but also what ideas need to be changed. It is the dramatic process of divesting the mind of old conceptions and the effort to frame a structure of faiths with all the originality mind and soul possess when they are directed purely to attention upon All the Factors. In that process many old conceptions will be recovered; without that process there can be no fresh illumination of God by his spirit.

The grand mystics from Plotinus to Martin Buber have

testified to an illuminating vision of God. In a profound sense, the claim is true. The meaning for the rest of us is clear. We have not yet attained a perfect vision of God, yet at some time and place there may be vouchsafed to us some farther and truer view of things divine than ever we have seen. True mysticism means a willingness to change, an ever-ready expectation of yet more light. If you do not wish to change your mind, you had better stay away from God. The very heart of the mystic retreat is a churning and turning and overturning of all the contents of mind and will. For the religious community which is the church, if there is to be a valid mystical clarity, religion must be based not upon the rigidities of creeds but upon the expectancies of worship.

The fact of mystic force is more easily attested. Large numbers of mystics have exerted exceptional influences on practical affairs. None of the Hebrew mystics, from Elijah to Jesus, practiced withdrawal without return. Their return was like a wind from the desert blowing away old injustices and old ideas. The mystical power of the great prophets of the eighth century before Christ is the very foundation of all Western morality. Their proposals for a spiritual and universal and moralized faith are not yet accepted by popular religion. To call the roll of the most celebrated medieval mystics is to name those who not only practiced long periods of absorption in the divine presence but also engaged extensively in practical affairs.

For this combination of spiritual retreat and active influence in public affairs, none are more notable than Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century and Catherine of Siena in the fourteenth. They both practiced extremes of physical discipline, yet both engaged in wide-ranging moral endeavors. Both founded monastic houses or religious orders. Both wrote numerous letters to princes, bishops, popes, and kings. Both journeyed to distant cities or foreign lands, Bernard from France to Italy to help establish Innocent II as the rightful pope, Catherine

from Italy to France to persuade Gregory XI to return with his papal court to Rome. Both are credited with many miracles of healing. Both engaged in learned disputations, settled princely quarrels, and in turbulent times exerted constant persuasions of peace.

If the most celebrated medieval mystics may not always have been blessed with mystical clarity, the story of their lives reveals a mystic force expressed in extensive practical labors and moral influences far beyond their less mystic contemporaries.

What the few notable mystics have done by way of transmuting mystic retreat into mental clarity and moral force, untold numbers of ordinary mystics are in lesser degree constantly doing. Through quiet meditation or sincere prayer, some guidance comes, some responsibility is accepted. Much of the virtuous life, of course, seems not to be directly traceable to previous prayer. Deeds of heroism may be merely impulsive. Most good conduct is largely obedience to training or custom. But the prevailing customs themselves are better in some places than in others. These better customs received their initial direction and force from someone's mystic experience. Some person or association of persons tried to review all the factors and so conceived outlooks and concerns which henceforth in that place became its guiding lights and laws. Henri Bergson has suggested that popular religion may be only the cooling off of the original hot metal of mystic experience.

But religion cannot live without the hot metal of original experience perpetually repeated. Large numbers of people are mystics without knowing it. They often attempt, as best they may, to view and review their affairs in the light of all the factors. It is in this secret and inviolable center of the inner self, when the light of All Things is focused there, that virtue is born, freedom claimed, and peace of heart secured. The experience may not have been sought, or even regarded as religious, but it was an initial and comprehending event.

A youth walks beneath old and spreading willow trees near college walls, and there a life course is set. Like fleets of triremes upon the deep sea, clouds move swiftly in the blue of the sky, and a man's courage is revived. In the silent church one sits for a few moments alone, and composure for the day is gained.

So also public worship, even when faulty in ideas and ethics, enhances personal composure and develops an incomparable power of private virtue and social order. When all its elements come close to the truest and best, it yields also freedom and growth.

There yet remains a final mystic force of untold benefit. It is the force of altered ends and desires, the expulsive power of new affections. Whoever acquires a taste for God loses something of his appetite for personal power and prestige. Many men find that neither riches nor authority satisfy. In their latter years, they turn to the arts or awake at last to the desire to leave some good behind by way of endowments. The perpetual displacement of lower morals by nobler concerns and higher joys, which is the daily breath and being of religion, becomes one of the most notable and beneficent manifestations of mystic force.

The outgoing side of the mystic way has been stressed by many writers who insist that all true mysticism embraces the life of practical affairs as well as withdrawal from those affairs. Authentic mystics themselves, from Bernard to Evelyn Underhill, from Meister Eckhardt to Rufus Jones, testify the same necessity. With endless repetition yet with the joyous freshness of original discovery, they proclaim that the love of God is at the same time the active love of fellow-man.

Must we not then say that mysticism yields a valid clarity and extensive moral force. Not that ordinary mystics agree in their beliefs. There are theistic mystics and nature mystics and pantheistic mystics. If all retain some error, all achieve some enlightenment. Western mysticism based upon conceptions

of supernatural and personal divinity is less extensive than Eastern mysticism which has no such faiths. The Chinese have long been celebrated as nature mystics. In any case, whatever the basis of initial ideas, the paths of the mystic way have been illumined all along their lengthening courses in history by fresh insights of the mind and new concerns for human welfare.

Mystical clarity and mystic force have risen to their highest levels in the lives of the supreme mystics. Among the few originators there are amazing correspondences of faiths. In the realm of ideas, there is a kinship of upreach and outlook among these few which holds a promise of human harmonies yet to be achieved. In practical affairs, what warrior kings, what artists or philosophers, rule so many people upon the earth as Lao-tze and Siddartha, Mohammed and Jesus?

In the main, then, it is neither fixed beliefs nor specific morals which lift men to the light of salvation and the duties of redemption; it is the illumination and the power of communion with God. By no accident or coincidence but rather in the deeps of his religious life, did a great mystic of the thirteenth century, Jan Ruysbroeck, discover these two refreshing streams that flow forever from the mystic fountain:

> When we come into union with God,
> knowledge is quickened and love is made active.[1]

[1] Rufus Jones. *The Flowering of Mysticism* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), p. 205.

XI. MYSTICAL FULFILLMENT

What is life's meaning? What is our end and destiny? What is the goal? Is death the end? If not, what lies beyond it? If so, what are we living for? What does it mean to be saved? Will everyone be saved? Where is blessedness found? Is eternal life extension of life or quality of life? Is there a final fulfillment for all our hopes and strivings? Does all virtue find its due rewards?

Almost all the great mystics and seers and saviors give the same simple answer. The end and fulfillment of life is union with God. The infinite reward of all virtue is some communion with the Final Powers. If no good work is well begun without the guidance of all the factors, every good work is well ended in the satisfactions of harmony with All the Factors. Salvation is the attainment of integrity or wholeness of life in communion with the Whole of Life. Knowledge of God and the service of God find their fulfillment in the enjoyment of God.

One of the noblest collects of the Prayer Book gives the same answer as it voices concern about "all our works begun, continued and ended in thee." It is the answer of the English mystic William Law: "there is but one salvation for all mankind, and that is the life of God in the soul." It is the answer of Charles Wesley's stirring hymn:

> Take away our love of sinning
> Alpha and omega be;
> End of faith as its beginning,
> Set our hearts at liberty.

There is equally strong assertion that the salvation of the divine presence is timeless, not a blessing for the future only, but realizable in the present world. The reward is in the deed.

The reward of doing good is the blessedness of being good. The effect of godlikeness is godlikeness. The blessing for purity of heart or singleness of purpose is the blessedness of seeing God. The final goal of all our living and striving is some immediate sense of partnership with all the life there is, some sense of enhanced being by union with All Being.

This doctrine is vividly set forth by the scholar preacher William Ellery Channing as he asserts: "To hold intellectual and moral affinity with the Supreme Being, to partake of his spirit, to be children by derivations of kindred excellence, to bear a growing conformity to the perfection which we adore,—this is a felicity which obscures and annihilates all other good." [1]

The conception of the supreme end and reward of life as found in mystical fulfillment is not limited to Christian faith or even to believers in God. It is the avowal of Oriental religions also. The mysticism of the East finds fulfillment by complete absorption in the divine. It seems, indeed, to be a point of no return, without any mandate for the resumption of common duties. Closer examination discloses a powerful ethical content specified or implied. Perhaps typical of the Hindu sense of salvation as communion with the ultimate is the following from the *Bhagavad-Gita:*

> The soul of him that is self conquered and full of peace is fixed on the Supreme.
>
> He sees his soul as one with all beings, and all beings as one with his soul; his soul joined in union, beholding oneness everywhere.
>
> The seeker for union, thus ever joining himself in union, his darkness gone, happily attains the infinite joy of union with the Eternal.[2]

This passage declares the finality of divine communion, yet cannot be charged with the doctrine of retreat without return. It includes something of the humanitarian concern for all souls

[1] *Works of William Ellery Channing* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1886), p. 291.

[2] Robert French Leavens, ed., *Great Companions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), Vol. II, 181.

which is the ethics of Western religion. Buddhist teaching made its way in China because it offered more hope for the common people than the aristocratic ethics of Confucianism. As to the intellectual content of religion, the Far East has always been more hesitant than Egyptian or Semitic faiths to specify the nature of the ultimate. Possibly mysticism has more richly flourished there because of this very feeling of ultimate mystery.

It is thus not surprising to find in the East a fuller development of nature mysticism than anywhere else. There are no more powerful statements of nature mysticism and the final satisfactions of human accord with the whole of life and being than the landscape paintings of the Chinese. Especially the great artists of the Sung dynasty depicted the life of man as enfolded in the ultimate cosmic harmonies. That this was a deep and wide feeling is evidenced by the report that one collector alone, the emperor Hui Tsung, gathered five thousand paintings for his galleries.

Many of these works show forth the mingled known and unknown by depicting rocky hills or mountain peaks rising above their mist-covered slopes, all grounded in the firm clarity of nearer lands and trees and waters, usually with one or more small human figures set peacefully within the grand design of nature. Man was carried into the very center of a world that is itself a harmony, and found the meaning of his life as the achievement of accord with it. Nor is that meaning merely silence and repose. No artists of any time have excelled the Chinese in the intimation of vibrant movement by skilled arrangements of flowing liens and rhythms of light and dark. The universal life that is the reward of all good is never still. Mere stillness cannot share or receive it, but only the perpetual movement of the spirit of good within us. The divine communion that is the end of all our striving is at once the complete and satisfied end of all effort and the beginning of new and ever-moving creations and recreations of all things.

Although the mysticism of the West has been more defi-

nitely theistic, it has all the while been conscious of the vast unknown. Throughout its course have appeared challenges to the specific ideas and morals of current religion. It has been humble in its acknowledgment of ignorance, assuming always that the ultimate powers cannot be so fully defined as official theologies propose. And always it has urged and practiced a morality higher than the common ethics. No one more fully exemplified the challenges to standard religion than Saint Francis of Assisi. Barely avoiding a papal interdiction, his religion was the constant practice of the mystic way of union with all reality and warm compassion for all living creatures.

In modern times, many poets and philosophers and scientists have essayed expressions of mystical fulfillment. In moving passages, they have described the final satisfactions of the mind and the emotions as resting upon some sense of that total being which holds within its order the life of nature and of man. Some of them have grounded an ethics of human mutuality upon this ultimate order. From Wordsworth to Whitman, from Spinoza to Whitehead, from Galileo to Einstein, these and numerous others have declared that we must come into the most complete possible accord with all reality, including the world of nature and of human experience.

There is, I believe, an increasing awareness of this grand strain of mysticism and its fulfillments, all the more valid since it is the result of fresh discoveries by men in various walks of life. This awareness is evidenced in a striking way by the coincidences between two recent books in their common emphasis upon mysticism. One is the work of a young minister of Boston, the other by an elderly jurist of Florida. Although each presents a form of nature mysticism, both assume that the heights and depths of the mystic reward may be the experience of those who bring to it differing conceptions of ultimate reality. Both assume, also, an inescapable mingling of final joy with final duty.

Mr. Patton, the Boston minister, includes in the mystic way

not only rare and revolutionizing events but the less vivid occasions of the same kind of mystic experience.

> Men of every style of world view are in need of emotional deepening, . . . periods of immediate, non-intellectual absorption. . . . Whatever divine revelation may have been to the ancients, we have a counterpart in this natural revelation of our human mysticism.
>
> The man who has become at home in the universe is not stricken or subdued thus to discover himself and his home. He is exhilarated. He breathes the wide interstellar spaces. . . . Just as the universe and its creatures live warmly and in friendliness within us, do we live in warmth and friendliness among our fellows and in the starry world.[3]

Judge Harper has filled a beautiful book with this feeling of cosmic harmony:

> The harmony and beauty of the infinite universe, the magnificence of Nature's sublime plan, and man's integral part in it, and his participation with Nature's God in the creative process of evolution, the oneness of Nature, God and man in the infinite cosmos—these great realities arouse in one's mind a spiritual exaltation that transcends all man's theology and is the very essence of personal religious feeling. It fits one to become sensitive and responsive to the great interests of life.
>
> The feeling of living contact with the cosmic ego by which the spirit attains peace and energy and from which we feel that salvation and liberation come to us, is the essence of religion. The feeling of the presence of and contact with a larger impersonal life is religious experience.[4]

Here is the goodness of life immediately realized in this present world, the goodness of life as a whole. Religion is always the praise and celebration of life. It finds that life as a whole is good, that the last and final powers are good, that man may come to blessedness here and now by accord with them. But

[3] Kenneth L. Patton, *Man's Hidden Search* (Boston: Meeting House Press, 1954), pp. 64, 98.

[4] Samuel A. Harper, *Man's High Adventure* (Chicago: Ralph Fletcher Seymour, 1955), p. 96.

always for most of us comes the question: What about evil and ignorance and suffering and sin?

It has already been suggested that the mystic way is not only retreat but also return. In the very midst of the highest satisfaction comes the recollection of the practical world with its manifold goods and evils. It is indeed only by some kind of mystic withdrawal or elevation that the evilness of evils becomes most vivid. And herein lies a clue to the problem of evil.

Dean Fenn[5] used to say that there is nothing evil to us except that we already have a greater good. Human beings are more liable to physical maladjustments and suffering than the lower animals. What makes us thus liable is the complexity of our human organism. It is only by that complexity, however, that we can remember and forecast and laugh and reason. The evil comes upon us only because we already possess the greater good. We would not mourn for those we lose except for the love that made them precious. Even moral defections are intensely and tragically evil only because we have been touched by ideals of virtue and righteousness. Moral evils, moreover, would not be real evils at all did we not always possess the infinite good of freedom to choose.

Nor is this all. It is chiefly by the experience of suffering that compassion and sympathy are roused and put to work. Few are sensitive to the griefs and woes of others who have not themselves felt the hardships of trouble. To make the best out of evils is not merely to endure them but to transform them into kindness and devotion. This again is in the heart of the mystic experience. Within the divine communion are not only visions of sublime goodness, but new awareness of evil and new resolutions of sharing the perpetual creations and recreations of nature and of man that are the works of God.

If the fulfillment of life and the state of salvation as divine communion includes a heightened awareness of evil in its many

[5] William Wallace Fenn, late Dean of Harvard Divinity School.

forms, must it not also include an enhanced awareness of good in its many forms? Can there be happiness as experience of the supreme good without increased knowledge of the infinitely manifold goods that fill the world? Does not apprehension expand in both directions? The more man becomes sensitive to the many lesser goods of life, the more wondrous becomes his feeling for the Supreme All Good; the more he seeks a sense of total good, the more he finds common goods all about. Salvation must thus imply not only deliverance from the commissions of doing evil but from omissions of seeing good.

If, concerning moral evil, there is a lethargy in man from which he needs to be saved, is there not also respecting esthetic good a lethargy in man from which he needs to be saved? If many suffer deprivations of life because of unfortunate circumstances, some embrace the deprivations of life needlessly. Much of humanity suffers a lack of fullness of life because of harsh conditions, lack of food, lack of schools, ignorance of the arts and sciences. They suffer a poverty of esthetic opportunity. A smaller part of mankind suffers a lack of fullness of life because it refuses the riches available to it. The banquet of life is spread before it but it declines to partake. It is the lethargy of esthetic refusal.

This is the drama of the parable of the talents, kept alive by perpetual reenactment. If man would enter the kingdom of God, he must use his talents to the full in the situation of his life. He is not saved if he refuses to produce or to enjoy the goods of life according to his gifts and his conditions.

Do we then live in a kind of limbo of partial salvation? Is salvation relative? The answer is yes and no. Surely there is a sense in which men may be saved, not partially saved, but saved. Does it not come when the whole spirit of man accepts the spirit of goodness to make his own, or the spirit of beauty to follow and obey, or the spirit of truth to be his law and labor? Surely, also, there are few who fully follow and obey.

We are never completely delivered from our faults and follies, never fully aware of the beauties around us that fill the world with brightness and glory.

Does this mean, then, that salvation requires a knowledge of Shakespeare? Does it mean that people who possess and enjoy beautiful homes and gardens are saved and those are lost who live with ugly furniture and like it? Can I not be saved unless I understand the higher mathematics? Who then can be saved?

From one point of view, it means just that. There is a sense in which salvation depends upon how much of good we know or appreciate as well as upon how much good we perform. To know more fully the works of God must in some sense mean to be more fully saved.

On the other hand comes the echo of the ancient saying that these things are hid from the wise and understanding, and revealed unto babes, that only a childlike spirit can enter the kingdom of heaven.

The answer to this paradox lies in the inner spirit. The love of truth contains the essence of salvation though the store of knowledge may be small. Goodness is not quantitative but qualitative. Even people of limited talent and opportunity may have a passion for making something beautiful. Everyone by associations with others may become powerful in all these directions.

The answer lies also in that necessary mergence of these mandates and values in worship, which we have all along asserted to be primary in religion. Each of the mandates requires the others. To possess and enjoy books and beautiful gardens is insufficient if there be no compassion or brotherhood. To be devoted to a cause may be disastrous if it be the wrong cause. In his young manhood, Dr. Fosdick delivered a thrilling discourse recounting the tragic effects in history of zeal without intelligence. I think often of the youth of the world who are being trained to be loyal to false doctrines and false causes. They suffer the misguidance of their virtue. Goodness is not enough

without the guidance of truth; truth is futile except it be directed into channels of virtue and beauty; beauty is a snare which does not overflow into responsibility and charity.

One of the ominous phenomena of this present time is the general ignorance concerning the best religious thought and action on the part of those who live in the bright world of luxury and fashion and those who lead our vast industrial powers. To the extent of that ignorance, they are failing to employ their talents in the full measure required for salvation.

Salvation comes, fullness of life comes, by communion with God, with life as a whole, and in that communion all the conceptions and values and duties of life find their needed corrections as well as their mutual connections. And in that communion they find their final fulfillments.

There are many who enjoy the kindly airs of the late afternoon, who feel the coming twilight. Vivid apprehensions are being dimmed, practical accomplishments have nearly ceased; yet there is a sense of wondrous beneficence in the order of all things, a sense that we may safely commit the labors of all our years to the Total Good of unceasing energies, wherein alone may they be established, in which alone is our peace.

The end and goal of all private prayer and public worship is mystical fulfillment, communion with the All of Being that is God. This is not withdrawal, nor retreat without return. The life of All Being is an ever-moving glory and power, making and remaking all things new. To share that life is both beginning and end of all human good.

XII. THE TRUE CHRISTIANITY

It is highly presumptuous for any man to try to define Christianity, or to set forth even a tentative picture of the life of Christ. On the other hand, every Christian may try to give some fairly definite answer to the question: What does Jesus mean to me?

The difficulty of recovering with any certainty just what were the authentic words and works of Jesus has been shown by many scholars. It has been less difficult to recover the religion which the early church built up about him than to recover his religion. The religion about him, very different from his religion, is still the religion of the larger part of Christendom.

Many scholars, meanwhile, are not content to abandon the effort to reconstruct the clearest possible picture of the life of Christ. By gathering together groups of sayings that are the most consistent within themselves, with the situations involved, and with our own best religious insights, they have formed a body of faiths which can be used as a touchstone for testing more doubtful passages. By this method it is possible to fashion a reconstruction of Jesus' life and religion far more dependable than is often supposed.

Does that mean that we should give up religions about him and return to his religion? Not necessarily. Even our attempt to build upon his religion is colored by what he already means to us, which makes it to some degree a religion about him and not quite the same as his religion.

It has been said by liberals that the true Christianity is not any religion about Jesus but the religion of Jesus himself. More than a few celebrated men have said that they might become Christians on that basis. If by that, however, is meant his particular beliefs and practices, then many may still not wish to

be called Christians. But if by the religion of Jesus is meant his freedom of mind in selecting beliefs, his lofty moral spirit, his love of all things beautiful, and his practice of communion with God, then in his religion may be found the presage and promise of all our freedoms and all our hopes.

It must constantly be kept in mind that we are considering not the ethics of Jesus but his religion. Too commonly, theologians have suggested that if we do not have a theology about Jesus, we have then merely his ethics. This is a false alternative. The important alternative is not between a religion about Jesus and Jesus' ethics, or even his beliefs, but rather between his religion and any theology about him.

Of his boyhood and youth there are many glimpses and fair conjectures. There can be little doubt that he was brought up in the village of Nazareth. Much is known of life and customs there, some of them continuing to the present day. Food, houses, clothing, surrounding lands, and neighboring scenes are much the same now as then. Many of us have seen young women carrying on their heads as in Jesus' day the great earthen jars of water from the well. There is an echo of children's games in what he said to certain Pharisees: "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." That is, we wanted to play wedding and you refused, and then we tried to play funeral but neither would you play that. There is much evidence that in the synagogue school he became familiar with the sacred scriptures of his people, especially the Psalms and the Prophets. There seems to be no evidence that he knew much of the character of life in the Greek towns and cities not far distant, or of life in the palace of the Tetrarch. The story of his journey to Jerusalem at the age of twelve probably relates to his formal enrollment as a "Son of the Covenant," which might be called one of the "rites of passage" which anthropologists find among almost all tribes and nations.

The next clear picture is his association with John the Bap-

tist. He was strongly attracted by the preaching of the austere prophet of the desert, and by accepting baptism at the hands of John became, as it were, a part of his movement. That was evidently the occasion of a stirring experience wherein he felt the call of God to enter upon a life of peculiar devotion and service. Thereupon followed another decisive experience in which the whole character of his beliefs was clarified in favor of an inner and spiritual religion rather than one of material or magical elements. This was a profound rejection and a brave acceptance. As one who felt called to do a peculiarly distinctive service, he was tempted to expect a peculiar fortune and treatment. Surely God must afford a special providence for his special messenger. The temptation was the more subtle as coming in the language of piety and trust from the Psalms. But in the heights of a mystical clarity, he rejected belief in an intervening God and thenceforth all his life lived and taught by the more difficult faith in an in-dwelling God. The works of God are not divine interferences, which would always be special favors. They are rather the processes and providences of nature and the good works of man.

This crisis of his full maturity was a kind of swift alternation of emphasis between the ordinary and the extraordinary. He went to the gatherings about the Baptizer with a strong feeling of partnership with other and ordinary men in a common movement. He came from them with the elevated sense of a peculiar mission and calling. And then, rejecting all intimations of special favors for special labors, he chose to share the common lot, and ever after steadily sided with the common people as against every kind of division that separates man from man or men from God.

His early ministry was that of a healing and teaching rabbi, as he was sometimes called. He was moved by an infinite compassion and intense desire to help people, both those in physical distress and those who suffered a want of hearing the words of light and truth. Not wholly unlike others, he was a faith healer

and, one might say, a natural-born psychiatrist. In his day, as always, many maladies of the body were the direct results of moral excesses and confusions. The relief most needed was a cure of the soul. For the man sick of the palsy, he began the cure of the body by an effort to heal the spirit, saying, "Son thy sins be forgiven thee." Other records report many healings of bodily ills, often effected by ridding the sick of their fears of demon possession.

That this ministry of direct physical help was not his chief mission is evidenced all through the narrative. He felt keenly the spiritual bewilderment of the common people as "sheep having no shepherd." With growing sorrow and sometimes anger, he realized the unnecessary burdens of conscience laid upon the populace by the unreasonable demands of the strict Pharisaic laws. Not only by the revelations of his own mystic retreats but also through his close first-hand experiences with needy humanity, he forged the deliverances of his great positive gospel.

What was that gospel? What did he teach?

First of all, he made much of the primary doctrine of his own race and religion: faith in the oneness of God. The Pharisees also believed in one God but they did not accept the implications of that faith. Jesus severely criticized their observances as being outward only and not of the heart. If God is one, then must he be Lord of the inner mind and heart as well as the conduct of outer life. The inside of the cup must be made clean as well as the outside. Outer observance can have no religious meaning except as it represents the true attitudes and devotions of the inner spirit.

So also with respect to all other antinomies and divisions. Physical and spiritual fortunes are alike in the hands of God. The inner life is the proper sphere of communion with God, yet the outer life is in no other hands. Be not anxious. The present and the future belong equally to God; man may trust his providences for both. No barriers can divide the realm of God. The

parables of the kingdom of God are marvelous pictures of the oneness of God. Though his rule may seem hidden, it is in and through all things, constantly powerful and sure to emerge into increasing masteries of good.

Jesus was a thoroughgoing monotheist. The buttresses of this faith were not so much intellectual as religious. Only such a faith can lead to the highest conceptions of man and of the duties and rewards of the religious life.

One fact only deeply challenges such a faith: the evil in man. The last and most stubborn division in reality, the last barrier to the rule of God, is the evil of men. The old religion had met this problem by assigning the good to God and evil to Satan. Jesus would have none of it. He would admit no limit to the realm of God. He did not argue about the problem of evil or seek to account for its origin. He assumed that good is stronger than evil, that evil can be overcome; and he put into operation the power that can overcome it, the power of forgiving love.

This assumption and this task rested upon his other major faith, faith in the love of God. The character of God is like the forgiving father in the great central parable of the gospel. Much of the old Judaism had held that God loves the righteous but hates the sinner. Jesus would admit no such distinction in God and no lasting differences and barriers among men. There is no absolute difference between the righteous and the wicked. All are unrighteous, all have elements of goodness. The love of God goes out towards all. It is the attracting power of that forgiving love which overcomes and removes all divisions. This saving love of God men may share and imitate. There is in man himself a natural impulse to save, the physician to heal the sick, the shepherd to rescue the lost sheep. God is like good men, good men are godlike.

If God is one, if there is one all-inclusive life and power living and moving through all things, then men must worship him in spirit and in truth. We are to be humble and teachable

as children are, we are to be sincere and honest in the inward parts. We may be trustful and joyful. We should fear and trust God and fear and trust nought else. We need not be sad but rather rejoice, for the good is stronger than the evil. Above all else must we live a life of mutuality, for there can be no separations in the kingdom of God.

If there is in God a forbearance and forgiveness like that of a human father, if love is an ultimate reality and power, then the imitation of God is the law of conduct, and sonship to God both duty and reward. "Love your enemies—that ye may be children of your father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." This is a moral definition of sonship. Jesus evidently knew little or nothing of the Greek metaphysical ideas of divine sonship. His conception was the higher one of religious and moral meaning. All men may become sons of God by a life of loving kindness. God is father of all, but not all are sons until they become godlike. Perhaps the very fatherhood of God is something not quite true until men make it so.

From these two profound faiths come the two primary Christian mandates: to love God and to love one's neighbor. These summarize and fulfill all the law and the prophets. In many words and ways, Jesus gave warning of the outer circumstances and the inner qualities that may hinder the operation of these laws of love: riches, learning, even righteousness itself; anger, lust, covetousness, ambition. These all may become barriers to the rule of God, and causes of separations among men.

The unlimited universality of these laws of love is asserted boldly in the other great parable of the gospel, the story of the good Samaritan. The question as to who is my neighbor was not answered by a definition of how many human beings are included; it was answered by a story which described the neighborly spirit, a spirit to be applied always and everywhere without let or hindrance.

All these religious conceptions and faiths are brought again

into brilliant light by Jesus' answer to the Beelzebub charge. It was alleged that he cast out devils by being in league with the chief of devils. If true, he said, then good comes of evil and evil is divided and defeated. If not true, "if I with the finger of God cast out devils, then the kingdom of God is come among you." Reality is not divided between an ultimate good and an ultimate evil, nor yet between the spirit of man and the spirit of God. The power of good is stronger than all else, and that power which is veritably the life and power of God is manifest and present in all the good works of man. Wherever good is overcoming evil, there is God. Whenever a good man does a good work, there is the kingdom of God, the power and presence of God. This is thoroughgoing monotheism; this is the gospel of the love of God and the whole duty of man.

Nor is it duty only; it is also reward, the very inner nature and secret of man's fulfillment and redemption. The reward of being godlike is the blessedness of being godlike. With Jesus, the deed carries its own reward. Blessedness does not mean a change of lot but a change of heart. It is more blessed to give than to receive, always and everywhere.

This was not the doctrine of the Pharisees. In Judaism, obedience to the law was the condition to be fulfilled and blessedness the future reward for that obedience. Christian theology has in the main held to this ancient theory of future rewards and punishments, but also to the doctrine that man is powerless to earn or merit his own salvation. Salvation can come only as a bestowal of divine grace. What theology has failed to note is that this is impossible. Salvation is not external to the spirit of virtue; it cannot be bestowed. If it could, the soul of man would not be saved; it would be destroyed. Among the radical freedoms of man is freedom from the invasion of God. God is just as helpless to bestow salvation as sinful man is to earn it. Salvation is neither a reward for duty performed nor a gift bestowed; it is already there in the motions of virtue itself. God and man are not utterly separate. Where love is,

there is God. The full loving grace of God is towards man as blessing only as it is in and from man as his accepted nature and highest duty.

In Jesus, religion and morals, grace and virtue, are so merged that loving virtue is at once the effort of man and the work of God. In Christianity, there is no moral code but only the spirit of love. Love is the only law and love its own supreme reward.

Such a religion inevitably drew down the wrath and persecution of the Pharisees. They correctly saw that it was dangerous to the authority of the law. It cut the very root of legalism. In their day, the law was composed not only of the old Mosaic code, but also of numerous amplifications. Its requirements had become so petty and exacting as to be impossible of fulfillment by common people who had to toil for their living. It was a burden upon the conscience of those who supposed they should, but practically could not, obey it.

There is much to say for the Pharisees. They were men who loved righteousness as they saw it. Their spiritual ancestors, the pious Chasidim of Maccabean times, had waged and won a great warfare for the faith and fate of Judaism. The Pharisees maintained their laws and observances in order to preserve the purity of Israel from Hellenic corruptions, no less dangerous in Jesus' day than in earlier times. Theirs was a great system, and it was definitely threatened by the words and works of Jesus. They could hardly avoid opposing him, for their system had become a vast web of fixed interpretations of the law which only the learned could know and the leisurely perform, which the ordinary man could not hope to obey, and which for all its careful coverage, failed to reach the heart.

Early in the narrative, we hear Jesus saying things which transcended the scribal legalism. Early he did things forbidden by the law. And early came ominous complaints by members of the Pharisaic party. In the full tide of his brief ministry, he openly criticized the Pharisees as hypocrites and blind guides,

accused them of erecting barriers among men, and stigmatized their religion as external formalism. And they, on their part, began to weave the net of accusations which led to his death. In one chapter alone, the second of Mark, we may see the powerful movements of these conflicting ideas and forces. It is the picture of a free man freeing others from maladies of body and mind, asserting the right of the free mind to order its own institutions and the power of man to perform the godlike and redeeming work of forgiveness. Here too in this chapter is the gathering storm of opposition which led to the tragic end.

Jesus' ministry thus early became not only the work of healer and teacher but also that of the prophet. He saw that he was facing a situation similar to that faced by the old prophets and that his word must be similar to theirs. In the earlier time, the chief requirements of religion were the formalized rites and sacrifices of the cult, but the prophets denounced these in favor of common righteousness. In Jesus' day, the chief requirements were formalized mandates of the law, which Jesus denounced in favor of the spirit of love. Realizing the parallel, both as to situation and prophetic calling, he cried out, in the language of Hosea, "If ye had known what this meaneth, I desire mercy and not sacrifice." Nor could he fail to realize also the parallel of danger. Many of the old prophets had suffered trial, imprisonment, or death. Would he escape the same fate? Steadily and swiftly, the opposition of the Pharisees mounted to hostility and hatred and overt plotting. Against them, he launched his fearful condemnation: "Ye build the sepulchers of the prophets, and your fathers killed them." When at length he decided that he must face the opposition in its stronghold, he was transfigured with the glow of the fateful decision. He must go to the capital city, whatever the peril to himself. "Nevertheless I must walk today, and tomorrow; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." And when he looked upon the beautiful golden city of David, there came upon him as a mighty flood the whole tragic story of needy people, of unbending prides, and of the

sad rejections of prophetic and spiritual religion, now once more to be repeated. In this moment of danger and hope, there came, too, the flooding mergence of his compassion and frustration and foreboding. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not."

However else he may have thought of his own work and calling, the sense of his being a prophet in the line of the grand old prophets of his race was strong within him. This is further evidenced by other references to him as a prophet. After the Nazareth episode, he said, "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country." At the close of the day of Palms, after his eloquent words in the temple courts, his followers answered a question as to who he was. "This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." More striking still are the words of the disciple after his resurrection appearance on the road to Emmaus, saying that they were speaking of "Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people."

These, together with others, comprise an amazing number of allusions to Jesus as a prophet. That they should have survived at all through the rewritings of a time when very different conceptions were held, is ample evidence of their authenticity. That he thought of himself as a prophet is a mark of his own awareness of high calling. That many others considered him to be a prophet is evidence of the reverent regard he had won by his self-forgetting labors and lofty teaching.

Did he also think of himself as Messiah, or divine son of God? There is no evidence that he identified himself with any one of the difficult Greek conceptions of divinity which arose when the gospel had been carried to the Greek world. On the surface of the narratives, there are many allusions to him as the expected Messiah. But these are scarcely less confusing than the more metaphysical Greek theories of his person. Of Jewish

Messianic hopes, the majority of several kinds were political or apocalyptic or even military, and all of them intensely national. Jesus certainly fulfilled none of these. Other supposed fulfillments based upon a few slender coincidences of circumstance make out a very dubious case for his Messiahship.

Yet he was in a profound and wondrous way the fulfiller of prophecy. He carried to new heights of clarity and power the greatest conceptions of the ancient prophets. The presage and the promise of spiritual and universal faith that was in them, he realized and brought to fruition. This is fulfillment far more true and more religious than any other kind. It may be, especially towards the close of his ministry, that he thought of himself as the one who was to fulfill the ancient hopes, that there never could be any redemption of Israel by the political path but only by the path of inner and moralized faith that he lived and for which he was prepared to die, that the kingdom of God was not a glorified state of Israel but a universal rule of the spirit of God as righteousness and peace.

The gospel accounts of his recognition as Messiah are contradictory, some as coming early and some late in his career. In Paul, there is the statement that he was declared to be the Messiah by his death and resurrection. Some scholars say that if this idea is there at all, it must be the oldest idea, for it could hardly arise if it had been preceded by clear recognitions earlier. But once established, it could easily be thought of as having been earlier true and earlier known.

In any case, all the elaborate conceptions and theories about his person and nature are of minor import. Jesus was so wholly absorbed in his great task of the imitation of God and sonship to God by loving ministry that he put nothing higher than these, for there is nothing higher. This is the highest conception he held of himself and the highest conception that may be held about him. All the other ideas of his person and nature, however exalted they may seem, are merely intellectual theories,

lower because less religious than the moral sonship to God that was his and that may be other men's who follow his path.

Being no less nor more than fully human, his character and calling are imitable. It is often supposed that the imitation of Christ is the imitation of his way of life but not of his nature and calling. The opposite is true. Ordinary men cannot imitate his way of life. He assumed no responsibility for a family or for a normal mode of livelihood. Human life could not proceed at all were we to use his manner of living as a pattern for common custom. On the other hand, ordinary men can imitate his character and calling, his sonship to God, his saviorhood to man. Even Paul declared that "as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Jesus urged that men should forgive one another in loving kindness, not to prove themselves superior, but for the saving effect upon the transgressor. As though to answer the assertion before it was made that only God could forgive sins, he boldly declared "that ye may know that man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Ordinary men may be the agents of divine forgiveness. There are no other agents. When the Pharisees asserted their doctrine that only God could forgive sins, they excused themselves from any duty towards sinners. When Jesus answered that man had the power, he implied that man had also the duty to manifest the redeeming love of God by the activities of forgiveness.

Forgiveness as limited either to a Messianic power or to a priestly rite is merely magical, and not in the realm of the imitation of God. The religion of Jesus places it squarely in the hearts and hands of all his disciples. This identity of the forgiveness of man and of God is one of the radically new things which Jesus taught and practiced. It belongs to his gospel of man's sonship to God. It means that the true Christianity consists not in any doctrines whatsoever about him but in the imitation of his own character and calling, his sonship to God, his saviorhood to men.

Nor is this meaning changed by his death and resurrection. They add nothing to the content of the gospel. His death was like that of many others—Socrates, Servetus, Nathan Hale, and hosts of martyrs who have died because of their conflict with worldly powers of tyranny, social, political, or religious. His resurrection was not physical but spiritual. No one can put a true idea in jail. It will burst the bars. No one can silence a prophet by shutting him up in a tomb. His spirit will break even the bonds of death.

This does not minimize the effect of his death. There would have been no Christian history except for Jesus' crucifixion. His life and teaching would have been lost without the propulsion of that dramatic event. His death enabled his disciples to realize the radical newness of his teaching. It was brought on by his radical breach with the law of the old religion, and so became for Christians the end of the old law. It was the driving force that gave his new word its energy and success. But that is no reason for the high Christologies which were developed and are held to this day, nor for the dogmas of substitutionary atonement that prevail throughout much of Christendom. The wondrous redemptive power of his suffering love was true and valid, and gave to his disciples a courage and hope that released his gospel upon the world. But that is no authority for replacing it by a dogma that is entirely different, the doctrine that the sufferings of a righteous man could be cast into the scales to balance the debt of the wicked.

So also with respect to the resurrection. The power of the resurrection is not the power of a bodily or personal life resuscitated; it is the continuing power of his deathless spirit of godlike love.

It is thus not any belief about Jesus' death and resurrection which marks the Christian, but his partnership in them, as Paul said: "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings."

The content and essence of the gospel were complete be-

fore the death and resurrection of Jesus. His death freed his followers from the old law. His life and teaching had already discerned and preserved for them the spiritual and eternal elements of the old Jewish religion. His resurrection gave to his disciples no truths or faiths higher than those he lived and taught. Its enlivening power came from the fact that he not only taught those faiths but lived them and died for them. His death and resurrection liberated his own lofty religion which is itself the Christian gospel.

What, then, we ask once again, was that religion? In our time there is still more to be considered concerning the religion of Jesus if we are to examine afresh what is the true Christianity and whether or not we wish to follow it. Involved are some elements that belong to the imitation of Christ which have never been considered by Christian theology. They relate directly to the primary categories and absolutes that have been our concern from the beginning: truth and goodness and beauty.

The true Christianity, we have been suggesting, is not any religion about Jesus but his religion. Now we need to add that by his religion we do not so much mean his beliefs as his free spirit, not so much his moral practice as the fullness of his religious practice. We do not limit the religion of Jesus to his ideas or morals or arts. These are not in themselves religion. Religion is that inner experience and action which accepts and merges all these elements in their mutual appreciations and consequences. We cannot, of course, know much about Jesus' self-consciousness as a thinker. We do know that he included and merged those factors of life which are the necessary elements of religion.

First of all, then, he had faiths. His faiths in the oneness of God and the love of God were thoroughgoing and inclusive. He applied them in all directions, as the guides of practical conduct, as the trust and joy of the heart.

When one considers how prevalent in other religions and in Christian theology are various types of dualism, it is amazing

how close the monotheism of Jesus comes to the best philosophy of unity now widely held. To mention only Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne is to suggest how powerful in these days is the rejection of all dualisms, ancient or modern. When scientists are breaking down the old absolute body-mind dualism by showing that there is what may be called a modicum of mind in low organisms and even in living cells, they give strong support to the modern philosophy of unity, which in turn is singularly like Jesus' theology of unity.

The doctrine of the fatherhood of God is more difficult for the mind of today, at least in its more naive forms. The harsh conditions of life for many of the inhabitants of the globe seem far removed from the creations of love. Some modern humanists have depicted man as a gallant flicker of mind and courage over against a neutral or inimical nature. Now, however, there is more appreciation of the fact that the energies of nature are everywhere making structures of order. There is a new sense of the naturalness of cooperative forces. There is good support for the worship of love as an actual and potential ultimate of power.

It can scarcely be doubted that Jesus shared certain conceptions of his times that are now held to be in error. But the grandeur and truth of his major beliefs were never more nearly attested than today.

Now we have come to the point of a radical turn towards a new conception of the religion of Jesus. Whatever may have been the particular ideas and beliefs of Jesus, they are not the most important fact about his mind. The matter of first importance about the mind of Christ is that it was a free mind.

His was a selecting, choosing, discriminating mind. He had a deep reverence for the religion of his fathers, but he accepted none of it on sheer authority. From its traditional faiths and usages, he freely adopted much, and much he freely rejected. This he did not by the authority of a supposed Messianic nature but by the authority of his own free mind.

The imitation of Christ, therefore, must include the imitation of his freedom of mind. Those who wish to follow Christ may find that they are upon a more difficult path than they had supposed. They may follow any of the religions about Jesus without taking upon themselves either the duty or the privilege of free-mindedness. Not so the religion of Jesus himself. That requires the harder course of selection and discrimination. If we are to follow Christ, what he did we too must do.

We also have faiths. Many of them, whether we be churchmen or not, are inherited from the prevailing religion of our nation. Whatever they are, we need from time to time to examine and reappraise them, as Jesus did. We do not need to accept any of them on the authority of Bible or church. On the contrary, we ought not accept anything on sheer authority, nor require others to do so.

The heavy duty of free-minded discrimination must be chiefly the task of spiritual leaders and teachers. Not many who are busy mothers, busy farmers or miners or merchants, can achieve important gains of intellectual value. But the love of truth, a zeal for knowledge, and the expectation of yet more light is both the duty and privilege of everyone. As to the religious community, it needs to hold strong faiths and stout convictions. It does not need to hold any of them as completely final. It should hold them all as subject to possible change. It needs to hold the spirit of truth as a religious absolute, above all specific ideas and beliefs whatsoever. This is to be truly Christian, this is to have the mind of Christ.

Jesus had a vigorous ethics. He was not only moved with compassion for pitiful people; his love went forth to them as healing and teaching and forgiveness. The same untrammeled love went out towards the strong in the form of admonition and challenge. He would admit no barriers among men, for his ethics were founded on faith in a God whose love is universal. He would be the savior of all.

His morality asserts the dignity of all persons. It is not

merely how a man looks upon a woman but how he looks upon any person that is decisive. If he looks with contempt upon any other human being, he is not Christian in the meaning of Jesus' religion. God is no respecter of persons in the sense of special favors for anyone. Therefore must we respect the innate manhood of every person. The ethics of Jesus are more difficult to defend than those of worldly wisdom—so difficult that most Christian churches do not even propose to practice them. But they haunt the conscience of the world and in the last analysis constitute the strongest apologia for Christianity.

We also have an ethics. Our moral ideals must be based, as were those of Jesus, upon our conception of ultimate reality. Much of the good conduct of life is based on local experiences of trial and error and common custom. But those local customs are best which most nearly comport with the truth of All Things. In recent times, a return to a conception of the unity of all reality is yielding strong support for an ethics of mutuality. Such a view is a new confirmation for the Christian doctrine of respect for all persons.

Yet neither the doctrine of Christian love nor the ethics of mutuality give us a clear or easy solution for every moral problem. We have lately had and still have the dilemma of pacifism or war. Should we oppose militant evil by non-resistance or by force? Or again, in the light of the dictum of Albert Schweitzer, how shall we resolve the dilemma of competition and respect for life? Exactly what is the nature of the distinction between man and lower animal species? Is belief in the persistence of the individual mind through physical death the only warrant for the doctrine of human dignity? Is the possibility of heaven a sufficient compensation for the earthly contempt which some persons suffer? Is it contempt for persons to require that they enter a doctor's office by a different door than other people use? If not, what then is the Christian meaning of respect for persons? In this age of mass production, what would be the Christian conception of a more

humanized industry? For these and other difficult questions, we do not have clear and satisfactory answers.

We do have before us the task of more clearly defining the moral meanings of human dignity and brotherhood, of universal mutuality and freedom. The true Christianity requires the application of the absolute spirit of goodness more and more fully in every aspect of life, in the family and in government, in industry and education and every personal relation.

Jesus had a love of beauty. He had a joyous pleasure in looking upon trees and flowers and little children. The allusions to this side of his life do not loom large in the gospel narratives, but they are there in such force as to be undeniably authentic. He evidently enjoyed living in the world of birds and seeds and growing grain, under cloudy as well as bright skies, in the life-giving rain as well as in shining sun. His impression on people was not of a dour and severe temper but one of radiance, of one who lived in harmony with the beautiful world around him. There is little or no evidence that he was interested in what we call the arts, the presentations and representations of beauty made by man. But that he felt the ordered loveliness of nature to be both manifestation and symbol of the presence and beneficence of God is abundantly clear.

We too have a love of the beautiful. It is everywhere in human life. I have myself seen in the early homes of the West how women of the frontier kept alive in a sunny window a few stalks of geranium plants to cheer the lonely days of long and cold winters. Nowadays I see men, retired from their life work, devoting meticulous care to the grasses and shrubs and flowers about their homes. Women pore over the pages of journals that depict arrangements of spaces and colors, of furnishings and fabrics for making houses beautiful inside and out. In all parts of the earth are lonely poets who set forth in their measured numbers the unmeasured tortures and splendors of existence. Among all tribes and nations are those skilled in the livening movements and elegant figurations of their dancing.

Among all religions are sacred shrines where the order of rites and structures restores the mastery of wayward passions and harmony to the divided mind. These and many other expressions testify to the place of the esthetic in life and to the hunger for the beautiful that is deep in human nature. The true Christianity, if it is to be the abundant life and salvation for the whole man, must afford a large place to the spirit of beauty. It is one of the religious absolutes. Its labor is the veritable work of God in the perpetual creation of myriad forms of order in things material and spiritual, social and individual, throughout all existence.

Finally, prominent in the life of Christ was his practice of prayer. It is abundantly evident that he frequently withdrew from the pressures of exhausting work for quiet contemplation and prayer.

> And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. (Luke 6:12)

> And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went into a solitary place and there prayed. (Mark 1:35)

> And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when evening was come, he was there alone. (Matt. 14:23)

This was the heart and soul of Jesus' religion. It was in the lonely isolation of prayer that he gave thanks for the great mercies of his heavenly Father, that he gathered strength for the unstinted outpouring of his days, that he faced the perils he saw aproaching and formed the final and fateful decisions of his life.

He was not a god who had no need for prayer. He was a towering man whose struggles of the spirit in the presence of his God led him to challenge the whole force of an entrenched but mistaken religious system, and to achieve the lofty insights into the nature and duty of man that still light the world with their glory and hope.

Central in the religion of Jesus himself was not his list of beliefs nor his moral teachings but his communion with God. It was in the hours of prayer that all his thoughts and deeds, his principles and hopes, were brought into accord and unity within themselves and with the light of God. It was here that he came to be that pure singleness of mind and will to serve the Most High in loving all men that is his deathless spirit in the world.

We too may have our system and practice of worship as the primary heart and center of our religion. That practice may for us also accomplish the mergence of our best ideas and morals and arts into a total fabric of experience and action which is our religion and the completeness of our life.

If religion is to be based upon ancient dogmas concerning the nature and work of Christ, it can scarcely be called the true Christianity. But our religion may, if we choose, be patterned upon the religion of Jesus because his religion was not a closed system of ideas or ethics but forever open and free. It was and is a religion wherein the absolute and untrammeled spirit of truth and spirit of goodness and spirit of beauty, brought together in the human mind and heart, lead men to the knowledge and the service and the enjoyment of God.

XIII. THE NORM OF AMERICAN RELIGION

Some years ago I came to know a liberal American church distinguished for its extraordinary intellectual life. It was a small parish composed of exceptionally gifted persons and possessed of a small but exceptionally beautiful church building. Under the leadership of a scholarly minister of philosophic mind, it had become, as one observer remarked, a little esoteric circle of intellectual highbrows. It came to me vividly at that time that this was not a parish to be imitated, that this was not the ideal American church. What it was doing was notable and in its way highly admirable, but it could not be normal, it was not imitable. It seemed to me then, and it seems to me now, that it would be far more important for any church to achieve a character not extraordinary or inimitable but rather such as might conceivably become the norm of American religion.

The obvious fault of the church here instanced was its over-emphasis upon the intellectual. It did not lack either moral concerns or artistic symbols, but these were subordinate. It failed to make those emotional appeals necessary for the normal life of all men, or to interpret its liberal intellectual findings to the satisfaction of the average mind.

The failures of one liberal parish, however, do not justify a return to traditional religion, especially since the chief fault of the average American church is precisely the same—its over-emphasis upon the intellectual, but on a lower level. The average church, too, gives the first place to judgments of the mind rather than direct first-hand religious experience in all its fullness. And it does so on a lower level, because its judgments are those of the past and fixed for the future. It too fails to interpret its intellectual standards to the satisfaction, in this case, of the superior mind.

The average church, the present normal American church, is based upon traditional beliefs, not now acceptable to growing numbers. Despite widespread improvements in religious symbolism, the esthetic quality is much too low. The moral power and influence of the typical church is undoubtedly strong, yet lacking in sufficient clarity or breadth or force to be an effective guide for the economic customs of this mass-production age.

What then is a defensible ideal for the church in this age? What would be the character and nature of a parish church which might be the norm of American religion? Someone will say that we do not now need or desire a normal or average church; what we need is an ideal beyond the typical, a pattern of superiority. Perhaps this is what I mean by norm, that is, a design of what is ideal today but such as might become the normal church of tomorrow.

Such a pattern or norm is all the more possible under the aegis of worship as primary in religion. The very character and nature of that primacy affords an unchanging structure of religious experience and action within which there may be unlimited development in the content of beliefs and ethics. The very norm itself is not fixity but stability of form combined with perennial growth of content.

The first requirement, then, for a normal church of the future, is the centrality of its structure of worship. The desirable norm calls for a church that is not primarily a house of ideas or of practical activities or a house of the arts but a house of prayer for all people, a place of common worship.

But, once more, what shall we worship? How can we worship without some conception of the object of worship? Must not the first place be given to the definition of the object or objects of worship?

This is in some measure true. In the typical church there proceeds the worship of God. In that procedure there are held before us, according to the tradition of any particular church, images or ideas of the ultimate power. Whether these concep-

tions are held as divine revelations or not, they have become fairly clear as the specific faiths of the religious body. If these faiths have become fixed dogmas, then indeed the first place is not given to worship but to beliefs.

However, if these faiths are held not as final beliefs but as faiths subject to new light, then there may develop the full and glorious cycles of experience which make worship the supreme action of life and of religion. I say cycles because whatever the initial images or definitions, they are likely to be altered in the very midst of their acceptance and adoration. In the total religious history of the race, the worship of man, his mystic experience, has been not only the result end of his preceding conceptions but the beginning of new mental clarity and new moral force, and so on in endless cycles. Definitive ideas cannot be primary in religion, for in the last analysis they do not produce religion, religion produces them.

This may become the more clear if we consider worship as beginning in a simpler way. Many things in everyday life are in some sense objects of worship, that is, objects that have value or worth and give immediate satisfaction. The few fresh flowers that we find each day in the house give us pleasure and are of worth or in some degree worshipful. How much more is the adored lady who gathers and arranges them an object of worth and worshipful. Yet how mistaken and futile to make her the chief object of worship or a substitute for God. Most of us have heard someone say after the death of a loved one, "She was my whole life, I am completely lost without her." He would not be lost if at some earlier time he had learned to see both her and himself as members and parts of the final Whole in which alone all several and separate things have meaning and all persons find fullness of life.

Worship thus comes not so much by defining as by beholding, not so much by analysis as by immediate and intense awareness. We need not at once try to define the rose or the man or

the building or God, but just to behold the glory and grace that is there.

A fuller awareness of anything must at length consider its connections with all other things, all its causes and all its effects, the thing in its total relations. A pleasant room, pleasant people in our town, fascinating grandchildren, the infinite favor of life in a free land, the griefs of people in Hungary and Egypt, the sun and the rain and all the stars, these and all else need to be included. At last it must be the totality of life that is the object of worship, the supreme worth and final good.

We are constantly affected by, and we ourselves, as Carlyle said, are constantly affecting, the entire universal life. However many times we may change our conceptions or theories or definitions of ultimate reality, our religious effort, the total movement of our highest worship, must be the effort of accord with All the Life There Is.

The first care, then, of those who seek to build the normal church is to secure its firm basis in common worship. The confessional church with fixed beliefs cannot in the long run be the normal church. It will become abnormal, for the norm, type, and pattern of pure religion is not in definitions of the mind but in communion with the Most High. The style of the future church will be a free church, ever the same in the form and essence of worship, forever revised and renewed in the substance of its beliefs and morals.

If definitions of beliefs are not primary for the foundation, they must be the first consideration for the superstructure. Here we can take only a fleeting glimpse of source materials for normal American faiths.

The first of these is the monotheism of Jesus. If Christianity is to continue to be the normal religion of the West, it will be the imitation of Christ, the religion of Jesus carried forward in his spirit. We have not yet fully explored the way in which Jesus accepted and expanded the great Jewish doctrine

of the oneness of God. Though a formal belief of the religion of his day, its implications were not discerned nor taught until he drove them home by his drastic criticism of the Pharisees and his incomparable parables of the kingdom of God. For religious reasons, Jesus lived and taught a faith in the presence and power of God in and through all things. Today, for both religious and intellectual reasons, such a faith is congenial to many modern minds.

From the science of our own day, we may take the assumption of law and order throughout all creation, and the consequent conception of the unity of all reality. Traditional religion now makes a bow to this assumption and then ignores it. It does not take seriously the universality of law. Its typical theology of dualism fails to accept the unity of being which is one of the main stays of modern faith. Science in its investigations of mental as well as physical phenomena rejects the old matter-mind dualism of traditional religion. If the dualism is true, science can have little value for religion. If the dualism is false, then the method of science for the study of nature in all its intricate aspects is necessary for a more and more complete understanding of reality as a whole.

From recent philosophers, we may take the postulates of process and order, that there are energies moving in processes of perpetual re-formations not only throughout physical nature but through all reality. This affords a conception of the supreme reality as the all-inclusive being that is continually making new structures of order, many of which are the good works of man.

Important consequences derive from these ideas. Such a view of reality or of God corrects current conceptions in opposite directions. It modifies traditional theism by its deeper valuations of the physical universe. It corrects modern Humanism by enlarging it to embrace the entire cosmos as the center of attention and value. The possibilities of new religious harmony on the basis of a new realistic theology are unlimited.

Such a view blocks the road of evasion. The old arguments as to whether there is a God or not become irrelevant. The skeptic can no longer evade the demands of religion by the easy path of unbelief. Religion no longer asks him to accept a speculative belief about the supernatural. It simply calls him to the effort of accord with reality itself, all of it, in no matter what terms he may define it. Such a task can no longer, on merely intellectual grounds, be avoided. The churches have not yet even begun to exploit the advantages of this unassailable position.

This position is of course only a starting point. It does not prevent but rather encourages any church to proceed in any direction it may choose towards a more developed theology or cosmogony. The only assumption necessary for hope and growth is that all determinations of belief be regarded as open to the revisions of later truth.

Religion has now within its grasp an incomparable resource and field of intellectual life and growth. Nothing could be more favorable than the amazing coincidences between the major meanings of modern science and modern philosophy and the best insights of pure Christianity before it fell into the dualisms of Greek theology. The intellectual life of the church on this new and realistic basis may rise from the dead level of fixed dogmas to the thrilling ventures of new explorations, yet all the while possessed of an assured trust not diminished but more firmly established than ever before. The *spirit* of *truth* in all its purity and promise may once more become the spirit of the churches.

With equal vigor, the moral life of the normal church may be enlivened to more thoroughgoing influences. The new emphasis by science and philosophy upon the vast web of life that embraces all living creatures becomes a new sanction for the ethics of mutuality and respect for life. If it also opens some problems not yet clarified, it adds new vigor to the Christian doctrine of respect for all human persons. Now that all the

world has witnessed the ruthless sacrifices of human lives to the god of the state or the tyrannies of totalitarian rule, the old assertion of the dignity of man is being given new meaning and application.

The first reassertion may well be the Dignity of Man in his Personal Compassions. It is not only neglect which violates human dignity; sometimes it is patronizing attention. Assistance to the needy may easily be proffered in such a way as to belittle both him who receives and him who gives. It is not respect for persons but contempt of persons to offer merely material stuffs while withholding personal and spiritual association. The old Stoic aloofness is not enough. It was a vertical virtue, too upright to be neglectful, too unbending to show resentment, yet a false dignity of withdrawal into forbearance and isolation. The Christian attitude is the outgoing reach of forgiveness and fellowship. Only such a spirit is fully respectful of persons, and thus an enhancement of human dignity for all concerned.

It is evident that respect for persons must be manifested not only in personal relations but in customs and laws as well. The moral concern of the normal church will seek the ways of righteousness for industrial and political life as well as for private life. This implies, first of all, the Dignity of Man in his Vocations. The independent farmer, the independent craftsman and storekeeper, these have dignity in their callings. The ancient thirst for independence is in part the thirst for dignity. If it is in some degree a vanity seeking the respect of others, it is more deeply a self-respect imposing self-responsibility. The daily work of every man is so large a portion of his life that it must perforce involve the deepest drives of motive and satisfaction.

Today the world's work cannot be accomplished by independent individual enterprise alone; it requires also the large operations of corporate enterprise. Among the by-products of mass production are the loss of vocational satisfaction and a lessening of individual dignity. Already in many industries

various plans of profit-sharing tend to overcome these losses. Wherever the real partnership of capital and labor is recognized by some system for sharing profits, human dignity is enhanced.

A restoration of dignity is accomplished also where certain corporations are beginning the experiment of labor representation on boards of directors. Instead of a directorate elected by share-holders only, one or more members are chosen by the entire labor force, wage and salaried.

Another valuable movement of like effect is the annual Vocation Day which some churches have held. A public service in recognition of some one trade or profession and the value of its labors to the community assists its members towards a social point of view about their labor and at the same time upholds their self-respect in the performance of it.

By promotion of these and other movements, the church may foster the view of work for human providence as well as for profit, develop the human values of industry, and assure the dignity of man in his vocations.

At the present time one of our sharpest problems is the Dignity of Man in his Communities. In many towns and cities, there is no total community of human beings. Some are disbarred from a proper share in the privileges and responsibilites which belong by nature to a man. This would not be true had we been less blind in the recent decades. For so long have we permitted unholy customs of race segregations that we have failed to see that they have become more destructive of the dignity of the perpetrators than of their victims. Certain customs and laws constitute contempt of persons and violate the dignity of human beings. They have at the same time an inescapable reaction: whoever is contemptuous of another has already lost his own dignity.

Any church may do something towards removing this stain upon American morals. To begin with, it can welcome to its own worship and membership persons of any race or color who may wish to come. Many local parish churches have al-

ready done so. In any case, a major ethical project for a normal church must be the assertion of the dignity of man in his communities.

Thrust upon us from many quarters also is the need to consider the Dignity of Man in his Diffusions over the habitable globe. The brief notice of the ecumenical spirit and movement has already pointed to this problem and offered some hints as to its solution. Here it is reiterated as a necessary portion of the moral concern of the normal church.

In the past this concern was centered in the missionary cause and movement. Lately, it has been the objective of large relief organizations and foreign aids of many kinds on the part of government itself. These all have been highly important manifestations of consideration and respect for members of races without distinction all over the earth. But none of these is now sufficient for the task involved, though all are in some part still valuable.

Among these efforts, it is the missionary movement which most needs reformation. Its original intentions of respect have all too often turned out to be operations of contempt. On its upper side, it has carried something of the veritable spirit of Christ to many thousands, and extensive educational and humanitarian benefits to many more. On its lower side, it has been blind to the contempt for other peoples and their cultures often implied in its methods and message. Even today it does not see the range and depth of the aid needed nor its own inadequacy to supply it.

Few can look here and there among various peoples today without a thrill of admiration for their courage in starting upon the path to freedom. Few can look without a touch of dismay in realizing how long that road must be. Freedom is not won just by the riddance of colonialism. Freedom requires many implements by which alone its fair new life may be realized. It requires techniques, technological skills, and machines to provide

the basis of physical livelihood. It requires institutions to teach the skills and manage the machines. It requires laws to regulate the institutions and their productivities. And supporting all, it requires ideas and faiths to compose the laws and sustain them. A free political structure cannot long exist unless upheld by some popular order or harmony of spirit, some prevailing ideology.

In view of the desperate need by statesmen in these new nations for all possible spiritual order and unity among their people, some very searching questions present themselves to the American churches. Have they considered the relations of their foreign missions to the problems of government? Are they aiding the attainment of unity or only introducing new factors of division? If they are bringing a Christianity of quest and faith and venture, they might assist an old religion to new and adequate transformations or they might plant the seeds of some new superceding structure. If they are bringing merely the old unchanging dogmatisms, they are only adding to confusion and rendering all the more difficult the establishment of free and democratic governments.

Everywhere there is need for constructive ideological formations. At the moment it would seem that the best way to assist the formularies needed abroad is to achieve them more generally at home. If the average American church should long continue in those fixtures of belief which are already a danger to our own political freedom and democratic order, then the less we export our religion the better. If the norm of American religion should become such as I am seeking, however inadequately, to describe, then its structure if not its style would be imitable and helpful abroad as well as at home. It would be a positive furtherance of the dignity of man in all his societies over the earth.

The normal church will find other areas of fruitful moral endeavor under the impulsions of the *spirit* of *goodness,* but

it dare not neglect to foster the dignity of man in his personal compassions, in his vocations, in his communities, and in his diffusions over the habitable globe.

With equal vigor, the esthetic values will be the concern of the normal church. Where one man thinks, a thousand men feel. Behind the long history of the arts are the vast forms and movements of the human emotions. These are primitive and elemental, they cannot be quashed, they can be refined and directed. Ideas are made powerful by powerful symbols, projects draw adherence by their vivid presentments, order and integrity of spirit are aided by noble designs in music or architecture or other arts. The impulse to beauty is so deep and universal that it must perforce be woven into the fabric of man's religion.

Religion is not primarily a matter of the arts any more than primarily a matter of beliefs, but is rather primarily worship. Faiths and beliefs help religious experience and by religious experience are confirmed or changed. The arts help religious experience and by religious experience arts are utilized and developed. The emphasis on worship is not chiefly a matter of the arts at all. It only looks that way, because public worship requires words or songs or other symbols for communication and for expressing outwardly those inner actions of the spirit which comprise worship.

Respecting the esthetic experience and its integration with religion, only two further comments need be noted. The first is the necessity for all esthetic expression to follow canons that are the same for all the arts. The canons are unity, movement, rhythm, style, proportion, and design. Especially are these laws necessary to the primary art of public worship if its forms and usages are to be helpful for the inner actions of the spirit. Whether ritual actions be in the style of the Friends meeting—positive silence followed by considerations, concerns, and consensus for commitments—or use the liturgy of the Prayer Book, they are in part effective because they obey these canons.

It is amazing to read now and again of the movement to improve the forms of Protestant worship as a movement "to enrich the service." For the past thirty years several writers have inveighed against precisely that. The first canon of the arts is not enrichment but simplicity. The techniques of liturgics are difficult and exacting. They require careful analysis and disciplined training. If the chemists and physicists and engineers employed by big business corporations were as ill prepared for their allotted tasks as are ministers for the conduct of worship, we should have no modern industry at all.

Critical also is the dearth of concrete materials for public worship. Divinity schools might well offer annual prizes for compositions of hymns and litanies to express the powerful faiths and vital concerns of free religion today. Before too long there should appear new hymn and service books with a large variety of texts for the minister and for congregational participation. Already, notable collections of non-Biblical writings are available for scripture lessons of moving spiritual value.

Religion always has convictions and faiths and projects of good. These are often considered and reconsidered in sessions where men reason together. They should also be given warmth and clarity and beauty by poetry and song and ritual celebration until they become the comfort and joy of the common man, his comfortable trust, his joyous commitment.

If religion is to be more than coldly intellectual, either as traditional beliefs or radical speculations, it needs works of art, both to be symbols of ideas and to stand in themselves as immediate presentments of good.

The other comment relates to the value of the arts as intimating the alternation of attention between the One and the many, between the universal and the manifold factors that make up everyday life.

The most important symbol is that of unity, the representation of integrity and holiness, the intimation of divinity. The church building itself may be the best symbol of unity.

It can be so designed as to assist withdrawal from common affairs and the turning of attention towards God. In some way, it should be stark and austere, to demand honesty. It should strip the soul naked. It should say: You may lie to yourself somewhere else, but not here.

This is a difficult assignment for the architect. Many new buildings in the contemporary mode are admirable, especially those which surpass the average American church in this note of severity. They have achieved a structural tone which at once carries an intimation of holiness. Others have been designed in such a way as not to afford a ready grasp of their structural stability and wholeness, and so fail to impart integrity. Still others of better structure have employed interior shapes and colors which are those of everyday life. They take you right back to the house or hotel where you came from almost as effectively as pictures of beds and bathtubs.

Early American meeting houses, and thousands of similarly plain buldings were symbols of withdrawal from common affairs to the attentions and concerns of the Sabbath day. Buildings of modern design, large or small, may also have the unity of structure and austerity of tone needed to represent the wholeness of the world and call for the integrity of persons.

The other most effective symbol of unity is a central altar or communion table. More than any other object, it indicates a holy place, a place of religious experience and action, the presence of God and the self-offering of man. It may have upon it an ever-burning lamp or candle lights or flowers or a cross, or be marked as standing before a background with figures or striking colors.

The use of the cross has greatly increased among Protestants, but is still controversial. In general it is wise not to use objects as symbols if they confuse more than they clarify meanings. It were better not to use the cross at all if it signifies a benefit received more than a spirit to be imitated. It does mean a benefit received, but the blessing cannot be truly received ex-

cept as a spirit imitated. A cross in a church may say to some: Here is a place were you cannot even rejoice until first you have taken account of the dark evils and sufferings of the world. Or it may say: Here is a place where we shall try to keep our religion free of those rigid legalisms which sent Jesus to the cross. If a congregation has learned such meanings, it might wish to use the symbol, but never blatantly and never in the manner of a decoration. Liberal churches, on the other hand, would probably prefer to use the simpler symbols of flowers or lights as being more easily read by all.

The house of worship itself, in its structural clarity and by its interior composition, may become the most effective symbol of unity and the most potent call to worship that religion can devise.

Unity can have little significance except as it gives order to the manifold. In the average or small building, the recollection of common affairs must be largely a matter of the imagination. It is in any case difficult to represent the many concerns of practical life without developing a multiplicity of forms which divides attention and prevents the achievement of integrity and wholeness. Those who plan larger buildings may be able to symbolize a considerable range of life concerns and still not challenge the over-all mastery of the structural design.

In almost any church building, there may be placed something to represent the world of the many, those manifold ideas and natural structures and human affairs which are given their complete harmony only in religion, because their complete unity is only in God. If it is too difficult to represent them by figures carved or painted or designed in glass, there might at least be placed upon the walls of the church the solemn and challenging words *Truth, Goodness, Beauty.* The *spirit* of *beauty* is one of these religious absolutes because it is in itself the effort to bring multiple factors of existence into harmony and wholeness.

The normal American church does now have, in actuality,

ideas and ethics and arts. In the norm of the future, these elements will be more clearly recognized, the incompleteness of each acknowledged, and all regarded as open to the light of new revelations. They will not be looked upon as final beliefs or projects but as living faiths and purposes ever renewed or revised by the perpetual activities of the *spirit* of *truth,* the *spirit* of *goodness,* and the *spirit* of *beauty.*

These elemental mandates of truth and goodness and beauty are deep in the nature of man. They are the primary drives of the greatest men. From them flow the highest activities of the human race. Their separate pursuits are often in conflict or incomplete. None can stand alone, each requires the others. It is only in religion that they are harmonized, it is only in religion that they are carried to their ultimate ends of accord with the Final Powers. The complete action which effects this mergence and universality is the activity of worship. As primary in religion it is at once the noblest duty and most sublime joy of men.

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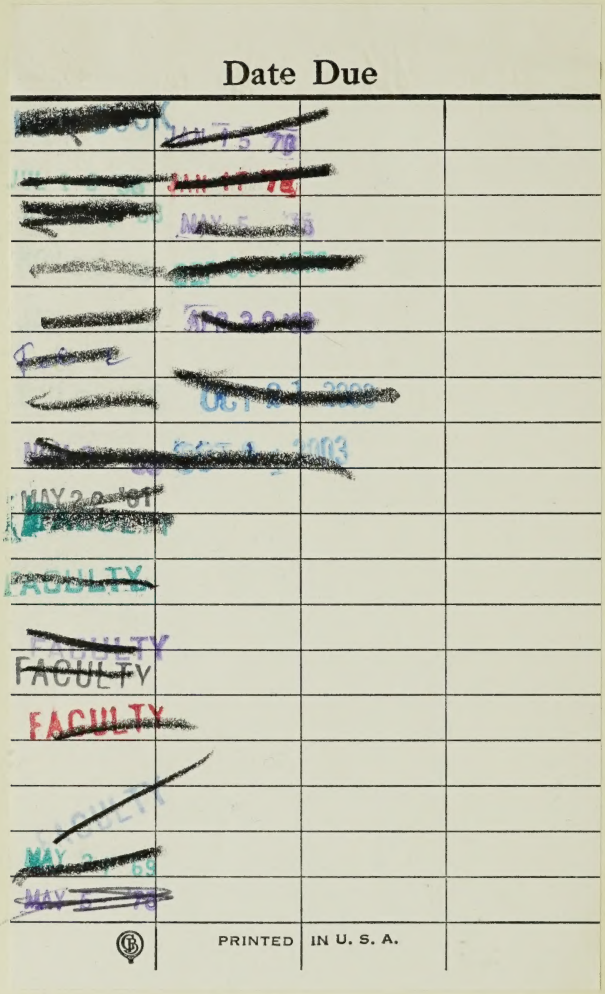
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